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"If the teacher smiles a lot, or the kids do, you know it's good in there": A study of students transitioning into fifth grade

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“If the teacher smiles a lot, or the kids do, you know it’s good in there”: A study of students transitioning into fifth grade

by

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Dedicated, with love

to the children.

For Acknowledgement

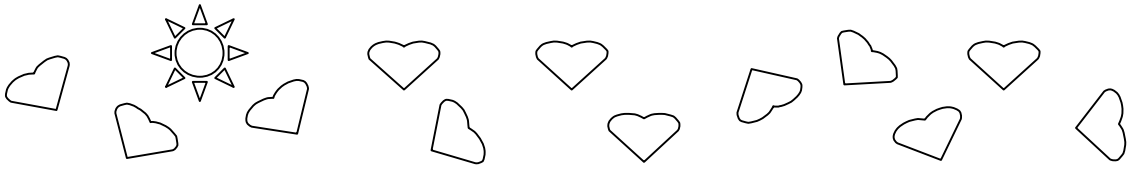
"Any day now, I shall be released."
-Bette Midler

Diane: "Only the ones who believe, ever see what they dream, ever dream what comes true. Life gives us magic and life brings us tragedy. Everyone suffers some loss. Still we have faith in it, childlike hope. There's a reason that outweighs the cost. And gravity throws all these rules in our way and sometimes the spirit refuses to play. Only the ones who believe, ever see what they dream, ever dream what comes true." Diane, you believe and dream for the world, and for me, childlike hope, things that come true.

Mitzie Mouse: "Baby mine, don't you cry. Baby mine, dry your eyes. Rest your head close to my heart, never to part, baby of mine. Little one when you play, pay no heed what you say, let your eyes sparkle and shine, never a tear, baby of mine. But you're so precious to me, sweet as can be, baby of mine." Thanks for missing me when I am gone and greeting me each time I return with a happy wagging tail. You are my sweet Mouser.

Grandma, Grandpa, Mom, Dad, and Eric: "This is a song I've been singing for a long time. But I think it's only recently I discovered what it's all about. You've got to give a little, take a little. Let your poor heart break a little. That's the glory of, that's the story of love. You've got to laugh a little. Cry a little. Until the clouds roll by a little. When the world is through with us, we've got each other's arms. You've got to win a little, lose a little. Yes, and always have the blues a little. Cause that's the story of, that's the glory of love." I love you all, always.

For the children: "Real life. Day and night. Night and Day. We go together just like black and white. I never want to loose your love, or let the distance get the best of us. Cause time is moving fast enough. Real life. Day and night. Night and day." Still we know, it's going to be all right." Forever you all are in my heart and soul, day and night.



Karen: "Every night, I'd sweat and snort, searching for the right support, I'd tried some string and paperclips. I'd even tried my own two lips. I stitched and slaved and slaved and stitched until finally one night, I arose from my workbench triumphant. Hooray! Exhausted but ecstatic I ran out to you, with the prototype in my hot little hands. Now the diva didn't want to read it all, but she finally did! And the sigh of relief that issued forth from her mouth was so loud that it was mistaken by some to be the early onset of the

Shurrocian winds rolling forth with a vengeance. Oh my god, what joy what bliss! She's going to make a million for this!" Thanks for the right support, always and forever.

Beth and Jack: "Diamonds, Roses, I need Moses to part the sea of loneliness, part this red river of pain. I don't necessarily buy any key to the future of happiness, but I need a little place in the sun sometimes or I think I'll die. Everywhere is somewhere, but nowhere is near." Thank you for being the somewhere that's near. You are both so dear to me.

Gayle: "Bright before me, the signs implore me. Help the needy and show them the way." Gayle, thank you for helping me and showing me the way. Your kindness has always been overflowing.

Beth Maloch: "Bless you for your weakness. Bless you for your strength. Bless you for the smile that is so hard to trace. Sometimes the ending is the best place to start. Bless yourself. Bless your heart." Bless you for your belief in me.

“If the teacher smiles a lot, or the kids do, you know it’s good in there”: A study of fourth graders’ transition into fifth grade

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The present study was an exploration of students’ experiences as they transitioned from one classroom to another, specifically from the fourth to the fifth grade within the same school. Data were collected over four months, beginning in August of 2006 and continuing through November, in an urban, highly diverse school in a southwestern public school district. Data included interviews with students, parents, and teachers: focus meetings with students; classroom observations; and students’ journaling and art. Additionally, two questionnaires (August and November) were administered which included questions about experiences in fourth grade and fifth grade as well as about students’ perceptions of school. Although this study focused on twelve students from three fourth grade classrooms moving into three fifth grade classrooms, other students

who opted to attend focus meetings were also included in data gathering in order to gather important participatory and contextual information for interpreting the experience of the focal participants.

Two research methods were utilized in this study: qualitative and quantitative, specifically grounded theory techniques and chi-square tests of variance. Results indicated that transition for children was complex and multi-faceted. It was a taxing and self-defining process that changed the way children felt about school and teachers as well as how they authored themselves within their classroom worlds. The students assiduously negotiated the new classroom, dynamically facilitating their own transition to become successful members in a classroom context. They constructed and reconstructed themselves in response to the contextual demands and expectations they encountered. As the focal students developed strategies that facilitated their transition, they called on both prior knowledge and novel learning in ways conscious and unconscious. The children talked about their experiences in ways that troubled the notion that elementary students might be too young to understand the world around them. Data led to both a theoretical model of transition according to children as well as deeper understandings of students' perspectives on the nature of transition.

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Introduction

In my years as a teacher of fourth grade students, I never wondered where my students would go after "graduation" from my classroom. Of course, I knew where they were going— across the hall to the fifth grade. I would see them at lunch sometimes, once they had left my grade. Such was the way it worked: One year with me and then onward they went. I never thought more about it. If students had been successful in my classroom, my expectation was that they would be ready for the following year. All of this changed in the 2005-2006 school year when my principal asked me what I was doing to prepare my fourth graders to leave my room and enter a "very different place across the hall." Nothing, I told her. I did nothing to ready them. It was only in the late spring, after the students were busy cleaning the previous lessons from the walls, taking posters down, shoving desks against the wall, that I began to wonder what would happen to them as they left my classroom, the world they had come to know over the past year. Would it be easy to go from one classroom with one kind of teacher to another, especially because I knew the big changes in store for them "across the hall"? Were they prepared? The level of trepidation I felt told me that the answer to my questions might well be that they were not prepared.

It was at this time that I began to search the literature about transitions and found that there was virtually no research looking at grade level or teacher changes within the same level of schooling. Research had focused on transitions from home to school, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, a few studies on changing schools (as is often true for migrant populations and when parents need to move), and a burgeoning line on studies of the transition from high school to college, but no studies talking about what the children in my classroom needed, should know, or the pitfalls they could encounter as they moved from fourth to fifth grade. In an effort to find out what the children were going to experience, and perhaps what I, as a teacher, could do to enable a positive transition, my study was born.

Chapter One

Each new school year is a time of complex adjustments and transitions in the lives of children. During this time, children must construct new meaning as they engage in the new contexts they encounter. As children move from one grade and teacher to another, they require reorganization, construction, and reconstruction of their schemata to accommodate the knowledge needed for successful, positive membership in the new community. Children author themselves in and among such actions, constructing identities that are successful within novel domains (Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte, and Cain, 1998; Gee, 1999). Looking at times of transition provides an opportunity for examining the ways children author themselves and their world as they encounter those fresh experiences.

The purpose of this study was to explore the words of children as a lens for the close investigation of the experiences they have during transition, to illuminate how they negotiate a new classroom world, and how they author themselves within it. Access to understandings and portraits of ourselves come into existence as we create texts, whether oral or written (Gee, 1999; Kress, 1987). I chose to study children's negotiation of what Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte, and Cain (1998) called *figured worlds* primarily for two reasons: a) children are seldom given powerful voices to describe their schooling experiences; and b) the ways the students negotiate and figure themselves and their worlds when in transition has not been closely examined for young people. Such an examination potentially has interesting and profound implications for all involved in school contexts.

Statement of the Problem

Research has shown a knowledge void in regards to transitions between classrooms and grade levels. Drawing on the literature from within a sociocultural theory

perspective lens, four main areas of research gave dimension to as well as informed this study: schooling transitions, identity formation, affect, and power in the classroom.

Taking a socially constructed perspective is important when beginning a discussion about transition because transition does not occur in isolation, but instead is socially situated and constructed, with and among people. There is a well-established body of literature that adopts a sociocultural perspective for its exploration of how learners become members in particular worlds. Such literature asserts that learning is a part of a particular domain, or world, and is a literate act that is social in nature and active in construction (Ivanic, 1997; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Piaget, 1955, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978). The focus of this study was on the active construction of identities in school and in particular, on how children negotiated spaces during their transitions between the worlds of the fourth and the fifth grade for which different expectations and authorities were present. This study reflects an increasing recognition of the complex relationship between texts (oral, written, drawn, or read productions of world understandings) and the social practices that surround their interpretation and production (Candlin & Hyland, 1999). When individuals engage with a new "world," they must negotiate membership through tools such as texts (Gee, 1999, 2001; Holland et al., 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1999; Lewis, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978) that reflect the history of their negotiated membership. Because such literate acts are purposeful and complicated, it can be said that as one moves from context to context, challenges and successes occur that will facilitate or hinder the transition.

Theoretically framing transition through sociocultural theory, and specifically, through theories of identity formation and negotiation, provides a useful heuristic for understanding what is occurring. Because issues of power are always present in social settings and influence and shape classroom situations, they must also be considered. When people interact with the world, emotions arise that aid the appraisal of the experience (Frijda, 1986). With such affective responses evolving and waning through the interaction of thoughts and behaviors, it becomes paramount that we look at children's emotional responses to classroom transition as it would seem to offer

interesting possibilities for contributing to an understanding of the transition and negotiation processes inherent in school.

Transitions Between and Among Contexts

Although the transition between grades has been overlooked, it is not that transitions in general have been ignored by researchers. The difficulties inherent in, and stemming from, transitions between contexts for young people have garnered much attention. Definitions of transition have become increasingly diverse, touching on many different aspects of change. Transitions can be regarded as episodic activities (for example, cumulative file folder transfer, visits by parents and children to the next setting, and graduation ceremonies) such as in Elias (2001). Others, such as The National Middle School Association (1997-2007) and Koenig and Gladstone (1998), have regarded transition as the manifestation of developmental levels such as is experienced as one grows older and thus, "changes." Still others, such as Kagan and Neuman (1998), have presented transition as the dynamic, layered, continuous growth over time of pedagogical, curricular, and/or disciplinary approaches found in grade level goals, district, and state goals. Transition for this study was defined as Kagan and Neuman (1998) posited, "the continuity of experiences that children have between periods and between spheres of their lives" (p. 366) that are dynamic, layered, and developed over time through experience. This study was founded on the tenet that children may need support as they move from one world or context to another as maladjustment may occur during prominent key turning points in people's lives (Rutter, 1984) with one of those turning points being a child's transition between school levels (Reyes & Hedeker, 1993).

The majority of the literature about school transitions has concerned the move from the home environment or daycare to kindergarten (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992; Bredekamp & Glowacki, 1996), the transition between elementary school and middle or junior high school (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, & Hamilton, 1986), and the move from middle school to high school (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Cushman, 2006). There are only a limited number of studies describing the use of transition

practices from home to school (e.g., peer mentoring, visitation to the new room or school, etc.), and even fewer reports of formal expectations for the transition of children into these new spaces.

There is much research regarding transitions between home, kindergarten, middle and high school indicating the importance of how transition is experienced. Among the studies conducted, there has been an overarching focus on "graduation," be it from childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood, and yet, little work has been done looking at the particular identities created or instantiated or factors involved in the act of transition. If studies such as Bloom et al. (2005) suggest that adjustment between spaces varies and ranges from clearly positive to grossly negative depending on the specific domain in question, it becomes increasingly important that we look deeply at the environments, social aspects, and patterns students negotiate as they experience transition between spaces and that we look at the identities created through such experiences.

In the existing literature, the concept of transition is tied closely to the concept of "readiness" (Pianta, Rimm-Kauffman, & Cox, 1999). Ensuring that children in school are ready to learn requires that attention be paid to one of the most complex and significant changes they will experience: transition. Increasingly, however, the traditional construct of school readiness is being criticized for its disproportionate focus on a child's skill level alone (Ramey & Ramey, 1999). In a world of high stakes testing for which graduation is based on test scores and accountability measures, transition receives little attention except as it relates to this idea of "readiness" for the next grade. This study posited that there is much more involved as students negotiate and construct the world of schooling in their transition to a new grade.

Identity Formation and Writing

It is against the backdrop of transition that children develop identities within new contexts, constantly shifting those identities within even one context. By getting a better view, and in particular a student's eye view of the transition, new means of support that can strengthen the senses of self of children can be identified. Transition necessitates the

construction of a negotiated identity (or identities) within the new context. To better explore this process of transition, then, I looked to the literature on how identities are constructed and socially negotiated. Drawing from Ivanic (1997), I expected that as children engage in a new grade classroom, new identities would be constructed by building on prior experiences, negotiating contextually as well as socially. As children transitioned, they would potentially encounter a changing set of goals, interests, values, beliefs, and knowledge-constructing practices that would shape the sense they made of the world (Ivanic, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Theorists such as Deaux (1993) described how an individual's sense of the world is influenced by the motivations she has and her definitions of herself. She argued that people must continuously shift between identities because contexts are multiple and the ways of interacting within them are varied and contextual. This movement between selves, sometimes occurring seamlessly and at other times more problematically, creates a multiplicity of selves. Further, when people move from context to context, they are constructing and refining their identities, noticing consciously as well as unconsciously when and how to bring forth different aspects of themselves in order to shift between social spaces effectively and with positive reaction.

Theorists such as Piaget (1955), Vygotsky (1978), Bahktin (1981), Bourdieu (1990, 1991) and Bruner (1990) have theorized that the social nature of learning mediated through social interaction and circumstances, reflecting each person's own personal interaction with a social world. The idea that my students would be "constructing" new selves, negotiating who they were in the new fifth grade contexts, interested me. How would they do it? What schemas would they create?

My reading of Cynthia Lewis' *Literary Practices as Social Acts* (2001) and Gee's notions of social Discourses allowed me to see rituals of the classroom as socially mediated through participation. In their work, I found interesting discussion that complicated the notions of an easy transition for students. Lewis portrayed the classrooms of her study as social worlds in which learning involved engaging in a process of progressively becoming a fuller participant in those worlds. Her work clearly revealed

that social codes (ways of being in a certain domain) strongly influenced literary practices and took time and experience in their new setting to obtain. It took participants in her study time to learn and develop the social codes of the new context. Given her findings, it seemed important to extend her focus on social spheres to children's social spheres, particularly as these occur during a transition from classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher. Also important was the idea that literacy, in its more common definition of reading and writing, would need to be broadened to include, as Freire (1970) called it, "reading the world" (p. 34). So, for me, this literature meant that the identities, positionings, and dramatistic aspects of the classroom were important for capturing the social codes and understandings the children would be developing as they moved from one grade and teacher to the other.

Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain (1998) described how people generate and participate in what they called *figured worlds*. The notion of *figured world* as one historically entered and developed through "socially instanced, organized, recreated, and intersubjective" ideas (p. 41) was an idea that seemed apt for this study. Specialized ways of being, each predicated on a particular figured world, would create the voices the children were able to understand, the worlds they are able to participate in. Holland, et al. (1998) referred to these identities as "imaginings of self in the world" (p. 5). Thus, a study of the ways children create and negotiate their identities in different classrooms, how they negotiate who they are in the social milieu had the potential to illuminate the nuances of their movement "across the hall." By conceptualizing transition as identity work that is dynamic, multiple, and situated, I hoped to capture the multidimentionality of a person's identities—personal histories, values, interests, and experiences in the environment. The work of Holland and her colleagues, then, has important and interesting implications and provided a useful theoretical frame for this study of children's voices, identities, and negotiation of self as they moved, translated, and changed across contexts and times (Lewis, 2001; Holland et. al, (1998); Sarup, 1998; and Lave and Wenger, 1991).

This study looked at the ways children author themselves in new classrooms, as they engage in practices relevant for particular times and purposes. The heteroglossic nature of identity formation recognizes the plurality that exists in the "self." The texts and literate acts children experience showcase and emphasize the variable ways and means that expertise and understanding of contextual expectations occur and are formed (Holquist, 1990; Wertsch, 1991; Dyson, 1993). Through revealing the experiences and constructions children made, I hoped to be better able to discuss the challenges and successes they encountered in ways that could eventually influence the very creation of those structures.

Affect in School Contexts

Emotion and affect are a part of everyday school life, and particularly so during transitions between academic and social contexts. This area is thus an important one to review and understand for this study. Emotion and affect in academic settings is a relatively new arena of study. When Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, and Perry (2002) described academic emotions, both positive and negative in schooling, they divided these into emotional responses one experiences in school are varied, highly situational, and personal, and that emotions run through schooling experiences like thread through cloth. In addition, these researchers stated that the multiplicity of emotions experienced in school influence achievement and learning. Boekaerts' (2002) model of adaptive learning stated that in addition to the emotional ties that are inherent in learning situations, students adapt their interaction with the worlds in which they participate based on their past, present, and current world-given cues. These internal, personally constructed emotions are prevalent throughout interactions.

Findings resulted from a study by You and Schallert (1992) indicated that emotions influenced how students framed (or did not frame) their questions and how the students' feelings toward each other and toward the teacher. Similarly, Do and Schallert (2005) looked at the impact of emotions in the classroom, focusing specifically on classroom discourse. They reported that emotions influenced multiple aspects of the

experiences in the classroom, such as who spoke during class and what was said. In addition, they found that the feelings students had colored their experiences during classroom time. These findings are important for this study as the emotions and affective experiences of the children acted as a lens through which their experience of the classroom was colored, in particular, what Deaux (1993) explored: how an individual's sense of the world, including one's motivations, influence how one's definition of the self, and what Berlin (1982) referenced as creating "the real world" (how what one perceives and experiences *IS* truth).

Thus, any classroom, as desirable as a learning environment as it may be, will offer particular challenges to and be the occasion of emotional experiences for students, partly because it represents a relatively new situation for them. It is, as Op't Eynde and De Corte (2002) stated, a "function of the interplay between who they are (their identity), and the specific classroom context…revealed to them through their emotions" (p. 7). Because much of the work on emotions and learning has been done in experimental settings in search of the impact of emotions on cognitive or behavioral processes (Op't and De Corte, 2002), a valuable part of my study was its contribution to an understanding of emotions and identity work in an authentic learning environment, allowing for the rich contextual and dynamic nature of emotions, cognitions, identities, and experiences in actual classrooms and in particular with children to be explored.

Power in the Classroom

Classroom situations afford the teacher insider power. Arising from the data was the intense role a teacher's power had on the students, specifically, how they experienced teacher power in regards to prior and current experiences. Thus, it became important to frame power as a contributive influence on the children's authoring of themselves, their figuring of themselves and the world. Foucault (1975/1977; 1994/2000) began the discussion on institutionalized power, such as occurs in schools, as linked to knowledge forms and how it subjects individuals to expected norms and standards. The norms have no basis in "truth" but are produced historically. He argued that when people are under

surveillance, those in power necessitate the normalizing of behavior, classifying, examining, deciding, and labeling people. This normalization treats the less powerful as inferior. Within this view, power is seen both as personal, affecting one's agency, as well as worldly, based on social and historical forces (Holland et al, 1998).

Bloome, Carter, Power, Morton, Otto, and Shuart-Faris (2005) discussed power relations during classroom literacy events through their description of power as *product* versus power as *process*. They argued that there is not a single definition of power, that instead power is varied and complex and that it is important to take a reflective stance when examining aspects of power. When power is a product, "it is viewed as a commodity, an object; a measurable thing that one person has over another" (p.160), and when it is described as a process, it is noted as living between and among people. It is a hegemony of skills that others must believe exist in order to exist. Issues of power arose in this study as the children attempted to figure the world, a world in which the teacher took control and power, leaving little question about who was in charge of the classroom. Bloome et al. (2005) talked about such power as product, something someone has (such as the teacher), and that others want (such as the students). For Bloom and his colleagues, notions of power in the classroom are acts that members engage in, those for which power can be distributed, or held by a curator.

In my study, power was a prominent theme to which the students spoke often. It referred to the authority of the teacher to order the lives of the students. Although power has taken on many definitions including the current "child-centered" movement in schools or the cultural "subtractive schooling" notions of cultural capital, the power and authority of a teacher used for this study specifically refers to power of the teacher. This sense of the construct of power exists outside of cultural and ethnic issues and differences, and instead looks at power inherent through the nature and description of the roles enacted by teacher and students. This view of power was virtually unexplained in the more recent literature.

For this study on transition, the role of teacher power has particular implications. Viewing transition from the perspective of power presents it as reflexive and dynamic,

dependent on participation, consideration, and understanding in order to occur. By studying transition between contexts, the power relations among groups are studied. Still, although power relations are a part of what occurs in classrooms and in transitions between them, it is the model of power that is important to discuss (Bloome, et al., 2005) when examining what occurs in classrooms. An analysis of the types of power and how they influence the ways children negotiate contexts and identities can inform how and why children are struggling or succeeding as they move between social and academic spaces. Part of negotiating and understanding a new world is constructing and navigating within the power structures of those worlds.

In Summary

Learners have been conceptualized as individuals whose thinking and learning depends crucially on their previous classroom (and other) experiences as they engage as participants in a new context or community of which they aspire to be a part. Inherent in these "situational," constructed and reconstructed identities are power structures that can both challenge as well as inspire certain ways of being and acting within the confines of the world of a classroom. One's identities are, in a sense, a relationship with a context that is, "constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 148). Inherent within the relationship to the worlds are emotional responses and power hierarchies, especially for children.

A number of themes emerged from the body of literature presented here and developed at more length in the next chapter, that have relevance for the present study of twelve students attempting to transition into the new context of their fifth grade:

- Identity is multiple, ebbing and flowing throughout spaces, times, and experiences.
- Identity is negotiated within the contexts one inhabits or wants to inhabit.
- Writing is an act of identity construction.
- Transitions are complex venues for the negotiation of selves in a new world.
- Emotions are inherent in classroom interactions and in the world of being human.

- As all utterances, spoken or written, are socially situated, they are always made in response to what has come before and are made in anticipation of a response.
- At the moment of composition, all previous social and contextual experiences influence the text the author produces.
- All texts are dialogic, taking place within a specific domain, using a particular Discourse available to members of the community.
- Our notions of selves are constructed within the social contexts in which we live and write.
- Power and authority is enacted in classrooms in multiple ways and is a commanding indicator of the selves one develops in reaction.

This Study

In this study, I closely examined the classroom lives of twelve fifth graders as I came to know them from the late summer before they entered the fifth grade, through November of their fifth grade school year. These trainee members of new classrooms were making sense of the contexts and teachers they would come to know as "their classroom" and "their teacher." In looking at these twelve children, I began to make sense of how they drew upon their worlds (previous knowledge and experiences) to create who they were their identities in the new classrooms. In particular, I focused on how the students came to express who they were as fifth graders, their constructions of themselves *in situ* in the new classroom. I attempted to go beyond understandings of the social and cognitive processes of "figuring out one's world," to new understandings of the social and contextual influences on the evolving identities of children. By examining their writing, observing them in their school worlds, and attending and promoting discussion in focus groups about their experiences in the fifth grade classrooms, I was able to develop a deep awareness and appreciation for their construction and reconstruction efforts, as well as curiosity about the worlds as they crafted themselves through their unique texts.

I was not attempting to find out what all children do when they arrive at a different grade level and teacher's door. Instead, I wanted to look closely at a particular group of children in attempts to see exactly how they negotiated the knowledge they had previously with the requirements of the new space and time. I wanted to find out on what sources the children drew, what features of their previous classrooms supported (or did not support) their transition, and how these children negotiated and analyzed what literate acts were required for success in the figured world of their new fifth grade classroom.

Because I had worked previously at Radliff Elementary, I felt comfortable in asking the children to share intimate details and feelings about their experiences. Because of the interest and generosity of the teachers, parents as well as the administration at Radliff, I was afforded access in intimate ways to the children and the opportunity to learn about children's voices as members of a community, the perils of transition, and the glory that came with transforming themselves into successful participants in the new contexts.

Questions That Guided This Study

This study explored the broad question of the nature of transition. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1) What is the nature of transition for students moving from context to context, teacher to teacher, and grade to grade?
2) How does a student's composing illuminate the transition?
3) How do students attempt to create identities that allow for successful negotiation of the classroom worlds they are made to inhabit?

Each of these questions enabled me to dig deeply into the experiences of my participants. The first question helped me understand the ways students experience transition as a complex and multi-faceted process associated with their view of teachers and school practices during transition and presented information about how children make transition. Through the second question, I saw how children illuminate their

experiences, orchestrating and appropriating the voices into their texts. The impact of students' emotional well-being and feelings towards their experience influenced the ways they felt they were accepted or not accepted as members in the classroom. Finally, and perhaps most salient for this study, the third question attempted to represent how the students would be involved in a continually constructed, dynamic process that over time changed their sense of self and led to newly created identities forged in the trenches of experience.

Overview of the Next Chapters

The next chapter, Chapter 2, includes a review of literatures that are relevant to my study. Chapter 3 details the procedures used to carry out my study, including the different data sources and analytical strategies used to describe transition. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present the results from the study, in terms of thematic understandings and experiences as well as a model for understanding the experience of transition for these children. In Chapter 6, I discuss the results, point to some limitations concerning my research, and offer suggestions for future research and educational practice related to the transitions that children undergo as they move through the school system.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Because an enormous emphasis is placed in the elementary school years on helping children to become literate, one might suppose that there would be fairly constant agreement among teachers as to what being literate entails. This study looks at the ways transitioning students attempt to become literate in a new context, with a new teacher, and in a new grade level.

In this chapter, I will review four areas of research that have shaped my understanding of how to conceptualize children's transitions from one grade to the next. The research discussed here has influenced my framing and implementation of this study by informing my understandings about how children's identities are negotiated and shaped through the social spaces they traverse as they make the transition between one grade and teacher to another. I will begin by discussing the literature on transition as it relates to schooling followed by exploring different notions of identity and the processes by which children create who they are within the contexts they inhabit. After speaking of identity construction, I will look more specifically at how writing can inform self-construction and how the act of composing may illuminate this negotiation. The definition of identity used in this study posits that the self is multiple (selves) and dynamic (transforms over time and within domains). I then will briefly discuss the literature on the role of affect in learning and consider how this literature might inform our understandings of student's transitions. Lastly, I review the literature and theoretical framing concerning the role of power and authority in the classroom as a way of understanding the classroom contexts in which students are a part. In sum, the following literature formed the foundation of the study as well as the hypotheses and interpretations therein.

Transitions

As a result of the proliferation of ideas regarding transitions, definitions of transitions have become increasingly varied and multifaceted. Some regard transitions as episodic activities (for example, cumulative file folder transfer, visits by parents and children to the next setting, and graduation ceremonies). Others regard transition as the manifestation of developmental levels, such as is experienced, as one grows older physically. Still others regard transition as the dynamic, layered, continuous growth over time of pedagogical, curricular, and/or disciplinary approaches such as is found in grade level goals, district, and/or state goals. For this study, transition was defined as Kagan and Neuman (1998) describe, "the continuity of experiences that children have between periods and between spheres of their lives" (p. 366), and will be founded on the tenet that transition from one period or context to another could perhaps cause a child a more active reconstruction of selves as well as adjustment than previously thought. During prominent key turning points in peoples' lives strife and negative feelings abound (Rutter, 1987). A key turning point in a child's life is a transition between schools Reyes and Hedeker (1993) found that it can therefore be said that transitions as potential times of possible negative of troubling issues for children.

Literature about school transitions speaks most specifically to the movement from the home environment or daycare to kindergarten (Love et al., 1992; Bredekamp & Glowacki, 1995), the transition between elementary school and middle or junior high school (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, & Hamilton, 1986), and the move from middle school to high school (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Cushman, 2006). Within these studies, there are only a limited number of transition practices from home to school (example peer mentoring, visitation to the new room or school, etc.), and even fewer reports of formal expectations for the transition of children into these new spaces mentioned. For teachers, this means that little guidance through systematic research about how to insure children arrive ready and secure to learn has been done. For parents, this means little description to which to turn for how to prepare children for schooling in emotional or psychosocial

ways. And, for other stakeholders, this means little attention to what transition entails besides merely moving from home to school, and from mom to teacher (Blatchford, Battle, & Mays, 1982; Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992). Yet, there are studies that have reported positive outcomes for those schools and classrooms engaging in practices acknowledging and attending to transitions (Blatchford, Battle, & Mays, 1982; Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992; La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 2002).

When transition is spoken about, and strategies employed in hopes of easing movement from context to context, it is often an activity done in the school, such as "getting to know you activities" that are done. In the home such activities might include talking about school ("Next year you are going to be in kindergarten…"). In either activity the term *transition* most often denotes a single event of movement or entry into a new grade; for this study however, it is most useful to think of the term transition as a, "complex process that subsumes a number of different events and points of view" (Blatchford, Battle, & Mays, 1982, p. 2). Like the construction of ones selves, transitions are multiple and multifaceted. This means that researchers must look at more than a child's reaction to transition, but also the situation prior to entry, the experiences she has had, and the ways those around her are perceived as supportive or not supportive of her growth (Blatchford, Battle, & Mays, 1982). It is a continual and changing interplay of effects between prior experiences (Blatchford, Battle, & Mays, 1982) of schooling, teaching, and learning.

In the following section, I review the literature on each of the previously mentioned transitional time frames, first from home to school, then from elementary to middle school, and finally from middle to high school. Lastly, I attempt to show what these studies mean for my study's look at transition between grade levels, teachers, and classrooms.

Home to School Transitions

Because kindergarten is traditionally the entrance into formal schooling for children, the transition to kindergarten has been moderately researched. A large dataset

relaying information about the transition to kindergarten is available from the National Transition Study (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992). Launched in 1988, this large-scale study investigated a public school's ability to maintain the benefits achieved by quality preschool programs serving disadvantaged children. Data were collected from a stratified random sample of 1,003 public school districts containing kindergarten classes, with high poverty and high enrollment districts making up the bulk of the survey. The researchers looked at transition activities designed to provide continuity as children move from preschool, daycare, home, or other pre-kindergarten experiences to kindergarten. The data showed few schools have a formal policy related to transition, 13% to be exact. Most often the transition policy, as reported through surveys with teachers, was activities for "getting to know" new students. These activities were generally generic in nature and included such activities as open houses, a newsletter welcoming the family to the school, and/or a call home to meet the parents informally. Despite the proliferation of data to the contrary, the majority of schools claimed active involvement in transitioning children into formal kindergarten (La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 2002). Not only did the National Transition Study provide little child/parent awareness and involvement, transition practices, as reported in Love, et al. (1992) focused on families as reflected in activities such as open houses and flyers sent home attempting to inform and converse with parents. These practices were more common than any practice attempting to look at pedagogical connection and continuity (Love et al., 1992), or child, parent, or even teacher experiences.

The National Transition Study drew three major conclusions about early childhood policy and practice. First, there should be great variation in how transition activities are used, with different activities needed for different populations. Second, it is difficult, and yet most important, to create continuity from pre-school to kindergarten when serving low socioeconomic groups. Third, teachers and principals need more direction in developmentally appropriate practices particularly in the area of transition as it relates to more than "get to know you" activities. According to TNTS, teachers and administrators were seemingly lost about what practices could help to facilitate children's

transition beyond “first day of school interviews” and other surface activities. Interestingly, the activities meant to ease children’s transition into a new context were more for the sake of the teachers, acting as, “get to know you” when the students often already knew each other and it was the teacher who needed introduction.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in later response to the TNTS, suggested three tenets to aid children in a successful transition: parent involvement, communication between teachers, and child involvement and readiness (National Center for Early Development and Learning, 1996; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The guidelines given by the NAEYC promote the importance of teacher communication about curriculum and individual needs of students and goes far beyond activities in the classroom. They say that open communication is vastly important and enables teachers to provide individual transition conversations for specific children, as well as awareness of information about individual children and their families before children even arrive in their classrooms (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 2002). This open communication means teachers must be cognizant of the prior knowledge and experiences children enter their classrooms having had. Troublesome however is that Tertell and Jewett et al. (1998) found that teachers feel anxiety in regards to transitions. Teachers know that the task of transition for children is difficult, but feel unsure how to cope with the task of preparation.

Another definition of transition was presented by Walsh (1996) and Ramey and Ramey (1999) who spoke of transition as relationship building. For these researchers, relationships smooth the transition from home to school. It is through relational understanding promotion and infrastructure that teachers should strive for continuity between early care settings’ curriculum and that of the elementary school serving children in their communities. As such, all children can “benefit from being supported through the transition to school” (Pianta et al., 1999, p. 73). This study showed that through mentoring of teachers focusing on teacher’s transition practices (such as first-of-the-year interviews) and comparing them with those of student transition practices (such as learning to read the school map), and staff support for students, student’s transition

between contexts and teachers were and facilitated with less stress and negative feelings such as anxiety, easy when compared to those exhibiting no intervention.

Considering that the movement to kindergarten from other home schooling choices is the area for which the most parental involvement occurs, and that it decreases over time, it is pertinent that we consider children's responses to transition in such early time frames. Research on the transition to kindergarten can provide a useful perspective for understanding other transitions (La Paro, Pianta, & Cox, 2002) and allows introspection into how movement between contexts can be stressful, and yet productively facilitated with knowledge and strategy.

Elementary to Middle School Transitions

It has been shown that as children age, they feel themselves less smart, less good, and less hardworking than they did when younger (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, & Hamilton, 1986). They are also less likely to perceive themselves as capable (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, & Hamilton, 1986). This vulnerability for academic failure is heightened during school transitions (Eccles, Lord, & Midgely, 1991), particularly adolescent transitions such as the movement to middle school. The tasks that students must master in middle school in order to perceive themselves successful revolve around three general principles. They must: (a) establish a place for themselves in their new circle of peers, (b) gain the acceptance of new teachers, and (c) adapt to a new set of school rules and academic standards (Holland, Kaplan, & Davis, 1974). If they find themselves successful during their transition to middle school and adopt positive strategies and adaptations to the change in schools and contexts as mindful beings, they are led to it will lead them to further successes as they navigate future school transitions. If, however, they find peer groups that are maladaptive and disruptive to the support that a context can provide or if it is perceived as there is no support or connection, further troubles will befall them in high school (Felner & Adan, 1988).

The intervention that Felner and Adan (1988) studied is one example of a program established to help the transition to middle school and later to high school.

These researchers were able to prevent some of the negative consequences of the high school transition through enhancing school-based support, facilitating peer support, and reducing school complexity through environmental modification in the middle grades. However, most school systems lack any formal mechanism for orienting or preparing students for their next school level. Teachers know little, primarily from their own experiences of middle school, about what the transition will entail for their students. This is particularly true for schools with large populations of low-income students (MacIver, 1990) and middle class, white teachers. The facilitation of the transition for middle school students is sparse and therefore, as parental and teacher involvement wane, so do students. Such a schism between what students need and teachers and schools provide make the transition to middle school hard.

Middle School to High School Transitions

The transition to high school is considered the last step to becoming an adult. The world is characterized by the notion that graduation from high school is a large proof of adulthood. As such, warnings to middle-schoolers about how much school will be changing in high school abound and can create worry and anxiety about the impending transition (Cushman, 2006). Friends and siblings work, drive, have boyfriends, and are busy getting ready for college. Seemingly, their family and friends, those experiences in adulthood post high school hold a completely different life from their own. As such, it seems far removed from what middle school students know.

Moving from middle school to high school also changes ones social status from oldest and most knowledgeable, to youngest, thereby from powerful to "newbie," and "fresh fish." As a fresh fish, students can feel out of water, not able, and discouraged. These difficulties associated with transitions for children, coupled with the high stakes notion of high school and impending adulthood, make this transition a somewhat troubled time (Cushman, 2006). When Cushman (2006) interviewed students leaving middle school for high school, she found many worries strongly associated with the transition. She found ideas such as, "high school will be huge and confusing, the workload is

overwhelming, and older students will haze and bully the younger ones," prevalent (p. 48). By the end of the first few weeks, these tensions were alleviated some by sheer time in the situation and increasing experience. However, for many students, it was found that the transition to high school was troublesome and finding their way intense. Most students had learned through experiences which of their fears were true allaying some fears and creating others. Of course, there were some students who did not make the necessary adjustments on their own and continued to struggle. Could this be foreshadowing of later dropouts? Regardless of personal issues concerning transition, no student reported receiving help alleviating their fears before the actual transition to high school. Even trips to the school, which on the part of the administrators and teachers were meant to help, were full of warnings and ways to help such a difficult and potentially harmful time. These acted as prompters for fear and concern.

When students move to high school, they may encounter a learning environment that is less conducive for individual relationships, a place where motivation and learning seem increasingly fragmented, as classes and teachers become segregated (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) vastly in contrast to those cultivated in later grades. In addition, studies have shown that because of the drastic change in context, expectations, and structure, changes in personal goals also change during high school, and specifically as the first year wears on (Urdan & Midgley, 2004). As the context, expectations, and structures take on new meaning, so to do the transitioning students. Students experience a change in motivation and affect harboring more negative emotions and less motivation. In addition, student Achievement seems closely associated with decreases in emphasis on mastery goals (Urdan & Midgley, 2003). Instead, high school is predicated on a performance goal orientation, making the growth and learning of earlier grades seemingly irrelevant (Urdan & Midgley, 2003) and school's goals being grades and test scores (TAKS, SAT, etc.). Because the transition to high school changes the structure of learning as well as the goals related to it, social comparisons become increasingly prevalent (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). With students comparing themselves to others, experiencing a tight structure and

sequence, their belief solidifies that school is about performing in a certain, defined way, and that to be successful one must align their vision as such.

Stone (2003) investigated teacher reports of their communication and relationships with parents during the transition to high school in a large, urban, and predominantly minority school district. Hierarchical linear modeling techniques were used to estimate elementary (n = 10,237) and high school (n = 3,140) teachers' outreach to and trust of parents. Teachers with more negative attitudes about student learning capacities as well as non-White teachers reported less communication and less positive relationships with parents. Teachers in high schools with predominantly Latino student bodies reported the least communication and least positive relationships with parents. This was not the case for teachers in elementary school (Stone, 2003). Elementary teachers found it important to establish relationships and bonds with their children's parents, feeling as if they chose the school and students with which they worked. However, it is also true that they often did not follow through on the belief of the importance of communication and of relationship building. (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Love, et al., 1992).

When a teacher or administrator does act on notions catering to the importance of supporting transition, the transition can be made easier. By allowing students to gain increased autonomy within the transition process, they are able to feel control and success in developing self-determining patterns of behavior (Cushman, 2006). Elementary, middle, and high schools often become separate islands for children who face evaluation criteria that vary from previous contexts. There are perceived differences in student needs and identities and competition for scarce resources. Schools targeting different age groups are seldom encouraged to work together in vertical teams (Compas & Wagner, 1991) which further alienates one island from another. As students move from elementary to middle school, and middle school to high school, they face the sometimes difficult task of dealing with greater numbers of peers, interacting with adults in authority, and balancing their competing needs for social support and increased autonomy (Compas & Wagner, 1991).

From the above sampling of studies of transitions to and within schooling, it is possible to conclude that there is a close interdependence among parents, staff, and children for successful transitions. Attention to only one perspective will inevitably be only partially effective, and leave many children unable to meet the demands (physically, emotionally, and/or academically) of the new domain. A metaphor for the use of these three supports might be a pyramid. Each missing side of the pyramid would leave the whole shape unstable, perhaps even foretell its collapse whereas heavy support from all three sides allows for a sharp, proud apex with each edge connective and supportive to the whole structure. Parents, teachers, and others within the context, having already negotiated their entrance successfully the grad level mine field, can provide the supports children need to adjust positively to new contexts and people.

The most important statement that can be made concerning transition is that there needs to be continuity in environmental demands (Blatchford, Battle, & Mays, 1982; Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992). That is, demands and expectations from one stage must be compatible as well as understood in terms of the next. Those within the environment must aid others' transition within and among them. Certainly, change is not in itself a problem no matter how the transition is negotiated. However, a child's learning and development depends largely on the confrontation of existing ways of thinking about the world with those of the new environment's demands (Mangione & Speth, 1998). So, although the extent of a match between environments may be small, arming children with tools and strategies for succeeding, enabling them to enter a new environment, such as a new school classroom, aware of the differences between their previous experiences may indeed ease and promote healthy, positive strategies and psychological stances towards education.

Identity

The literature on identity is divided between two diverging conceptions. One is that of an innate, unfolding of a self, established as one develops throughout life. This

perception of identity provides that it is stable and unchanging. In this sense, it is fashioned early on and becomes an increasingly steadfast entity. One theorist who speaks to this conception of identity is Erikson (1974). According to him, identity is seen as something rationally chosen and singular, an internal state that develops over time, but is fixed at any one time. In contrast, from a socio-constructivist view (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) of identities asserts that they are constructed though a socially negotiated process that is constantly in action, built on prior experiences, and negotiated contextually as well as socially. For this study, the latter perspective—identity as multiple, negotiated, and socially constructed—is used.

Although not speaking directly about identity, Dewey (1938) described learning through interaction with the environment, through manipulating and developing the strengths of students with the help of a nurturing, skilled teacher who intimately knows each student. The act of nurturing provided by the teacher, Dewey argued, provides the needed aid and environment for learning. He proposed that children create a philosophy of learning that shows their personal understandings about themselves. This philosophy of learning is akin to the formation of one's senses of self, or the multiple identities one constructs. He believed that education, and thus learning, is life. The process of learning and education and the goals of learning and education are one and the same. From the experience of education and learning one creates beliefs and executionary possibilities for oneself. When someone is filled with eagerness, interest, and language, there is learning. Learning is thus a matter of negotiating, reconstructing, and restructuring identities. Dewey asserted that educational experience is a moving force moves propels the student to get out of an experience all she can, to wring out the experience. At the time, the student's goal should be to be moldable and pushed, and only then to exit an experience with new knowledge, a broader, more defined, deeper, and more "experienced" understanding of the elf and the world. The education of ones selves is not solitary in this way and instead is social in nature. It is community-oriented, not only in the sense that knowledge is made and understood in context, but that the knowledge is itself contextual and transferable through the act of exposure. People are a part of a community, not

outside of it. It is among these communities that one creates and shapes their identities. Dewey understood the power of experience as a cast for the possible identities a person will find and create, develop and use.

Piaget (1955, 1978) also believed in the active construction of knowledge through the progressive construction of logically embedded structures within what one knows. These internalized notions become the schemas one has about a domain, the identities one can act within. Schema can be described as an elaborate network of abstract mental structures that represent one's understandings of the world, in a sense, the identities one has constructed that make constructing a certain context possible. Over time, schemas become more defined through the assimilation and accommodation of new experiences. The disequilibrium (time where prior knowledge is unable to make a homeostatic balance), and later the equilibrium (a homeostasis of thoughts and experiences; sense-making), of increasingly complex schemas are capable of incorporating of new information. Glasersfeld (1995) proposed that observation and experience allow for the cognitive structure building such that a learner is always in a state of disequilibrium trying to get to restore equilibrium in which structures (schema) allow for the understanding new information. A person is continually differentiating and refining her schemas, her senses of herself, her identities, and integrating them into multiple contextual identities for use later in particular contexts and situations. A person actively forms selves, identities for specific domains and times. Because of all of this internal work, integrating, equilibrating, interacting, accommodating, assimilating, evaluating, and experiencing, one is not a passive learner, but instead, is actively pursuing meaning making within the confines of one's world, one's culture, one's knowing. As such, these authors explore the posits that learning is a meaning-making process specific to the learner's own experience, and is active. The activity of knowledge gathering (learning) is a reconstruction of identities for particular worlds, particular domains. For transition, this means that children as they experience a new grade level with which they have only minimal, second-hand experience, if any, will be an elaborate time for new identities.

So, identity is a socially constructed process continually negotiated through the context or situation (Bruner, 1990). It is multiple and dynamic (Sarup, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978) and carries a particular, yet changing set of goals, interests, values, beliefs, and knowledge-constructing practices that help shape how sense is made of the world (Ivanic, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This constantly interacting process of building one's self in the world creates a juxtaposition of *selves*, created, enacted, and sustained in different ways depending on the context, goals, languages, and experiences one has. Identity is multiple in different spaces and times, with choice and agency as a prerequisite to its growth. As individuals move across contexts (such as classrooms, or situations within classrooms), they draw upon, construct, and exhibit different identities. Each person holds multiple selves and is capable of using and illuminating particular aspects as the situation demands, constantly refining and reconstructing.

Deaux (1993) explored how individuals' senses of the world, including the motivations they have, influence how they define themselves. She argued that because contexts are multiple, people must constantly shift between identities. A transfer between selves, sometimes seamless and sometimes more troubled, creates a multiplicity of selves. Further, when people move from context to context, they are working on their identities, noticing consciously as well as unconsciously, when and how to shift between social spaces effectively. Seemingly, the more experience one has in a domain, as well as the more experience transitioning between domains one has done, the more able they are to utilize needed identities in novel domains.

Holquist (1990) used Bakhtin's (1981) *dialogism* to explain the constant conversation people engage in with their environment. He asserts that there is no human action that is single in expression, all having been built through the social and personal environment. Like Vygotsky (1978), selves exist in society and are transferred, constructed, and illuminated there. He stated:

> Existence is addressed to me as a riot of inchoate potential messages, which at this level of abstraction may be said to come to individual persons much as stimuli from the natural environment come to individual organisms…so long as I am in existence, I am in a particular place, and must respond to all these stimuli by either

> ignoring them or in a response that takes the form of making sense [meaning] out of such utterances (p. 47).

Here Holquist posited that life occurs within the meaning we make of the mass of messages received from the world. Because we are alive, we interact with the world, and thus, are answerers to the messages it provides. We answer and construct perceptions and meanings through making sense of the multiple happenings continually manifesting around us. We then translate those understandings into senses of who we are such that they make sense to us. According to Holquist, this is the essence of having identities within a world. In this sense, by making meaning, we "author" the world even as we author ourselves in the world (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, et al., 1998). Because the environment provides such frameworks for our understandings, both implicit and explicit, we are not free in our pursuits, creating meaning from random ideas and thoughts, but instead, foster the growth of meaning through the lenses of prior experiences and current perceptions. Like Levi-Straus' (1966) *bricoleur* wherein the world is created by hand, experience by experience, brick by brick, identities are built from which life takes hold. It is through the language, dialects, and pre-existing materials to which one has been exposed, that meaning is constructed. A person is predestined to use the lenses of previous experiences, holding them as knowledge about the world and ones selves, until further experiences attempt to quilt the situation with a further layer. Like a quilt filled with history, made piece by piece, so too does our world create itself within us. The means for this creation is language (Levi-Straus, 1966).

Bakhtin (1981) articulated that language is never solitary and instead is multiple and ideological, having been created from our histories as well as the world's history. People reside in "bounded, verbal-ideological and social belief systems filled with elements of various semantic and axiological content" (p. 304) each with its own individuality. Although individuals have access to the cultural legacy of others, they create their meaning from within the bounded schemas in which they live and move. Bakhtin called the creation of these multiple selves through the social worlds one inhabits "self-authoring." For him, the symbols, expressions, and experiences are socially

inscribed and heteroglossic. Thus, people both create and are created by their experiences, the contexts in which they find themselves, and the languages they use within each context. People are actively creating and recreating a *carnival* of selves in particular situations they are in. These situations potentially help make and remake inclusion into contexts possible. People shape and are shaped by different experiences, and they have various resources available to them because of their previous experiences. These are used in the shaping of their "selves." In this way, each person obtains different values, invitations, and notions within each context in which she arrives and/or resides.

The word *identity* is one way of naming the connections between one's selves and the social worlds one exists within. As such, identities can only be understood within contexts. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) posited that there are three ways of thinking about the authoring or negotiation of identities: 1) *Figured worlds* wherein all of the "cultural," "virtual," "intentional," or "imaginary" worlds act as lenses through which one experiences the world, 2) *Positionality* wherein people are seen in relation to divisions of status, power, and rank, as represented by constructs of social status or social capital, and 3) *Bahktin's Space of Authoring* wherein it is asserted that the world must be answered, not by choice, but by the mere presence of the self within it. The "voices" that make up the author, whether internal or external, are those elicited and maintained in response to prior experience (Holland, et al., 1998). These three contexts (Bakhtin's Space of Authoring, Positionality, and *Figured World*) emphasized that identities are always subject to revision and authorship through the context, created as one lives as a part of many worlds.

Bakhtin's term *space of authoring* can be used to focus on an individual's identities and positionalities in the world. "Individuals orchestrate the voices from their cultural and social worlds to create distinctive images of self and to envision their (future) social positions" (Skinner, Valsiner, & Holland, 2001, p. 1). As Bakhtin explained:

> In essence, the language as a living social-ideological entity, as a heteroglossic standpoint lies for the individual consciousness on the borders of the own and the foreign. The word in language is half-foreign. It becomes one's 'own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he masters the word, and adapts it to his

> own meaningful and expressive tendency. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is ***not***, after all, out of a dictionary that a speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own (p. 293-294).

For Bakhtin, nothing exists until someone authors it, someone brings its existence into the world by naming it. As such, everything has been worded before but must be reinterpreted, reinvented, and recreated by each individual in order to have legitimacy for individuals.

The individuality and personal processing involved in the creation of one's identities are thus a result of the cultural resources enacted within a social context experienced by an individual (Holland et al., 1998). A person molds herself into a participant in a cultural world, primarily through the social visions of other participants and assumed legitimate peripheral participation in the context (Lave & Wenger, 1988). People participate in increasingly participatory ways as they become a more secure, and legitimate part of the certain community of practice. Others' reaction to her presence, in part, inscribes a sense of self within that domain, her identity, her notions of self. The ways one interacts with others within a certain context, the ways one construct a sense of successful participation modify, as well as recreate, a self- identity that will be seen as becoming a member of the group. Holland et al. (1993) and Lave and Wenger (1988) figuratively ask the question, "Do I exist without anyone else?" Their answer would be no. Our existence is dependent on others. It is in the presence of others that the ability to author, one's *space of authoring*, exists that a world is figured or constructed into being. It is in this space that identities are constructed and reconstructed.

The contextual boundaries of one's language, experience, and understandings are fashioned as one interacts with the environment. Because we use signs and symbols (usually in terms of language) to interact, language becomes central to our understandings, cultures, and realities, our schema. Language "shapes, the situations in which we find ourselves enmeshed, the events that befall us, the practices we carry out

and, in and through all this, the understandings we are able to reach" (Crotty, 1998, p. 87). Prior experiences influence the understandings and learning that an individual crafts of a new experience. "Identity is actually something that is being produced, always in process, never fully completed" (Hall, 1991, p. 225). Transition calls to question how the new situations in which children find themselves foster the construction of realities.

For this study, the above literature is used to show that the social contexts that the students exist within allow for the authoring of themselves. They continually construct and reconstruct themselves through the worlds they experience currently, in the past, and in the future. The constant construction of identities makes the area of school a logical, yet complex venue for study. Identities are our personal means of figuring out the dimensions of our lives and contextualizing our unique human experience within them. They are the techniques for naming ourselves within society, within our lived worlds. These worlds are as different and multiple, therefore, as are our identities (Holland et al., 1998) and are shown more readily as we engage with a new environment with new participants.

Writing as Identity Construction

Voice in any form of text production is an often discussed topic. Whether it is Elbow's (1994), Yancey's (1991), Vygotsky's (1978), Bakhtin's (1981, 1989), hooks' (1994), or any of a myriad of others, one salient theme runs clear: an author is present within or behind her own texts. Thus, producing text becomes a dialogic act between the author and the world (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Holquist, 1990; Wertsch, 1991; Dyson, 1993). Elbow (1994) described one's voice as resonating in writing as the voice created when children write themselves into their own texts, bringing in their lives, emotions, and thoughts in their texts. For Elbow, voice is identity mirrored in writing shown through each stroke of a tool, each glissando of a word.

Faigley (1986) situated writing within culture, and in doing so, pointed to the importance of writing as a view of the social milieu a portrait of the landscape and its inhabitants. He wrote, "In a social view, any effort to write about the self or reality

always comes in relation to a previous text" (p. 536). Just as Faigley situated writing within culture, so too did Bahktin and Vygotsky. These theorists portrayed writing as a semiotic act, situated within a specific domain or context and as the expression of a writer's socio-cultural experiences and understandings, as a relationship between identities and environments.

Bruner (1990) also explored the salience of these sociocultural textual experiences and their relationship to identity. He explained that the stories people tell are social constructions rooted in the experiences, languages, and personal and collective histories exclusive to that individual. He stated that stories exist within a person's mind, not in the real world. They are internal voices, narrative texts, explaining the world itself. Narrative text acts as a lens through which all stories are constructed, therefore, they construct reality. They filter and narrate experiences, fundamentally personally creating meaningful expressions from others' utterances. Stories reflect the knowledge one has, the experiences one has had, and the possibilities available (Bruner, 1990). Bruner clarified that by composing stories (whether written or oral text), we become conscious of our own knowledge. Within that awareness, we acknowledgement of the values and thoughts that have led to a particular understanding is forged. In this way, individuals deconstruct themselves, socially as well as personally in order to construct a new self, a new view of others, and a new world from which they can live. This act of deconstructing the self becomes so unconscious that according to Bruner, it is a "habitual experience for structuring memories, experiences, and narratives in the past, present, and future." He added, "Life is not how it was but how it is interpreted, and reinterpreted, told and retold" (p. 36). For people then, life is the stories, the invented selves, the constructions and reconstructions made as we compose.

The stories we create about our world foretell the texts we are able to write. Researchers such as Brodkey (1992), Gee (1996), Lewis (1998), and Tobin (2000) have explored the ways that children recontextualize their experiences at home and at school through the use of texts. Through these recapitulated texts connections are built between official and unofficial worlds (Dyson, 2002; Marsh, 2006). Children use the symbolic

resources available in their repertoires to construct their own identities as well as establish shared worlds (Dyson, 1999). “Individuals manipulate language for their own ends, language itself manipulates one’s mind in society” (p. 371). Children utilize the experiential materials they have, specifically language, to construct their place in the world, their identity (Dyson, 1999). This experimentation and construction occurs alongside other children as each progress through school. In this way, students are creators of culture, writers of their own identities, narrators of their own lives, both publicly and privately throughout their schooling.

As personal consultant of self-culture, the act of composing is distinctive to each individual. Writing is a powerful way to learn, not only about the world, but also about oneself (Emig, 1977). It is, “often our representation of the world made visible, embodying both process and product” (p. 124). In other words, an act such as writing or speaking is a symbolic representation of attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge such that one can learn a great deal about someone else through the making of their texts. “It is an expansion of inner speech” (p. 125) that makes the invisible visible. As Emig (1977) quoted from Luria:

> Speech, [especially written speech] assumes a much slower, repeated mediating of process of analysis and synthesis, which makes possible not only to develop the required thought, but even to revert to its earlier stages, thus transforming the sequential chain of connections in a simultaneous, self-reviewing structure. Written speech represents a new and powerful instrument of thought (p. 10).

As a powerful instrument of thought, writing, unlike talking, does not depend on the actual situation at the exact time. Instead, only lingering thoughts and representations of past gone times and experiences, thoughts and wonderings are needed. In this way, written texts connect the past, present, and future to make meaning.

Berlin (1982) exposed the depth of this connection through his range of pedagogical theories about writing. He proposed that there are different definitions, often diverging, about the composing process, essentially in the way that the “elements of the process-writer-reality-audience-language-are envisioned” (p. 765). The ways and means of composing texts are predicated on the use of elements that combine in ways such that

the internal becomes externalized, illuminating the ruminations of an individual. He stated further that in order to write, one must deal in an alternate reality, one he called an *augmented reality*, meaning it was unknown before the elements responded to each other and symbolically built bridges between different ways we attempt to share and respond to ourselves and others.

Through the teaching of writing, we are, perhaps unconsciously, teaching a version of reality, and thus, the relationship of the writer within it (Berlin, 1982). When all the elements (writer, audience, language, and reality) are taken together, a certain field of knowing is inadvertently discovered. This reality is manifested through the interaction of both social and emotional responses to the surrounding world, including those people already holding membership. For example, a student may have knowledge within a certain space and time, a particular context, a language spoken, and even a particular identity. However, each of these (time, space, context, language, and identity) does not guarantee official membership. Because of this differentiation of selves *in situ*, the knowledge a person has swirls in varying individualistic ways to determine what is knowable, not knowable, and how knowing can be communicated to others. In addition, it determines successful participation.

The availability of resources for illumination during writing is dependent on the language one has available to use. "Learning to write is not a matter of learning the rules that govern the use of the semicolon or the names of sentence structures, nor is it a matter of manipulating words; it is a matter of making meanings, and that is the work of the active mind" (Berthoff, 1978, p. 11). "The truth is always the truth for someone standing in relation to others in a linguistically circumscribed situation" (Berlin, 1982, p. 774). By this, these theorists seek to explain that each person's reality is different, hinging on different circumstances and experiences. What understanding and knowledge is to one person, to another is meaningless, or meaningful in other ways. It is not completely intersubjective at any time because one cannot know from another but can merely attempt to conclude and learn. Language does not equate to any world as "the real world," instead

it creates "the real world" (Berlin, 1982). Thus, writing becomes a way for subjects to be addressed between people to create shared understanding, to attempt intersubjectivity.

Smith (1977) spoke eloquently about the process of writing and how writing creates, and is created, by individuals experiencing the world. She stated, "If one cannot form ideas without words, language is more than a tool; it is the essence of human life. It is more than a prosthesis, more than an extension of an arm or a leg; it is the arms and the legs" (p. 129). Her statement poses the importance of writing as a way to know someone, to discover her thoughts, feelings, and experiences. So for children, providing them the space, resources, and encouragement to "write their lives" is an important task and responsibility. It promises the best possibility for individuality of instruction as well promotes the sharing of the self in tangible terms, making the inside, outside. Writing creates space for students to develop and share themselves and their ways of knowing. As such, it can also provide an exceptional tool for showcasing ones understanding, perceptions, and knowledge about the worlds in which one exists.

Affect

In my study, I began with the premise that the most influential learning occurs through classroom interaction, and is most readily displayed through the talk that socially occurs therein. Talk provides sound evidence that emotional responses are an integral part of classroom life (Do & Schallert, 2001). This dialogue is interconnected in powerful ways and influences whom we talk to and what we say. The dialogue we participate in creates our connections, understandings, and often conclusions (Burbles, 1993) and thus provides a lens through which to see the ways we participate in discussions and create a grouping in which that participation occurs. How we feel, the affective portion of our possible selves, necessarily facilitates or discourages this participatory structure (Do & Schallert, 2001). Elucidating the ways in which students' affect interacts with their cognitive and composing processes in their experiences of transition was important to my study.

One of the most notable studies that examined emotions in the classroom was that of Pekrun, Goetz, Titz and Perry (2002) who reported on the antecedents of academic emotions in classrooms. They proposed that students experience a breadth of emotions in an academic setting ranging from joy and enthusiasm to anger and anxiety and that those emotions are directly related to academic learning, classroom instruction, and achievement. As such, different emotions influence the motivation to learn, strategies for learning, cognitive resources available, and one's self-regulation of learning. The motivation, resources, and regulation one has in an environment influence the impact of emotions in learning and, therefore, achievement: "environments and appraisals induce emotions, emotions in turn, influence learning and achievement" (p. 102). Lastly and importantly, Pekrun et al. (2002) expressed that emotions may be characteristic of both short-term and long-term affective development. This meant that the emotions one harbors about a certain class, test, or experience can carry into later experiences, for days, to future years. Students' appraisals of themselves as competent, and the value placed on learning and schooling for individuals are, therefore, closely tied to emotions (Patrick, Skinner, Connell, 1993).

The focus on affective/ emotional processes in my study echoes the recent upsurge of interest in affect by psychologists and educational psychologists more broadly (Boekaerts, 2002; Martin & Tesser, 1996; Meyer & Turner, 2002; Schutz & Lanehart, 2002). If all life events are "cognitively processed," meaning that each individual lives in a differently constructed and experienced social world (Bruner, 1990), then it becomes paramount that researchers look at and focus on the role of affect and emotions as predictors and incumbents of those differing social worlds, inherent in aspects of community building and positive feelings towards those groups of which we become a part.

Fredrickson (2001) defined this affectual relationship between person and world as embodying two parts: affect and emotions. She defined affect as any positive or negative feelings that are accessible. Under that umbrella, emotions were held to be brief, meaningful feelings. She provided joy and hate as examples of emotions because they are

fleeting. That is, emotions ascend to the surface of one's thoughts and then ephemerally dissipate over time. Affect, on the other hand includes steadfast, long-term feelings such as resentment. Similar findings resulted from a study by You and Schallert (1992) who found that emotions impacted every facet of the classroom. They affected who spoke and what they said. They even influenced how students framed (or did not frame) their questions, and the feelings students had towards each other. Do and Schallert (2002) looked at the impact of emotions in the classroom, and specifically on discourse. They found that emotions impacted the classroom in many important ways such as who spoke during class and what kind of sharing they did. Some students who entered the classroom with outside things on their mind reported it difficult to let those feelings go. They explained that the feelings colored their experiences even though they were contextually removed from the occurrence during class time. Boekaerts (2002) concurred in her adaptive learning model. Her model posited that we adapt the ways we interact with others based on our own perceptions of the situation, based on many experiences and cues occurring past, present, and future to that specific time. These internal, personally constructed emotional and affectual actions are prevalent throughout interactions and cannot possibly be separated from construction or experience.

McLeod (1994) reported that positive emotions were predictive of positive perceptions. In other words, the belief that positive emotion led to positive things happening. On the contrary, negative emotion predicted negative occurrences. It was as if the thoughts and emotions that one has were fashioned to happen later on. Particularly for students, Schiefele (1999) stated that they store the positive and negative experiences as positive and negative *valences*. A valence is described as an affective state experienced in relation to a particular domain and kept in storage as valences attached to schemata. So, experiences become a part of the mental representation about an activity or domain. Then, those states serve to monitor and protect individual goals and ensure action that serves the individual's emotional states. For example, if a student's experience in writing narratives is predominately negative, new situations surrounding writing will be influenced by those prior experiences, and therefore, the emotional valences associated

with them are also affected. Fredrickson (2001) agreed in her article about the powerful effect previous attributions and emotions can have on future experiences. She added that not only can people experience one type of emotions, positive or negative, they can also experience both positive and negative emotions in relation to one singular event. Additionally, she stated that positive emotions in relation to a previous negative event might undo or perhaps lessen the negative emotion associated with the negative experience, and vice versa. In some ways, positive experiences are seemingly powerful and yet, as MacLeod and Conway (2005) found, negative emotions are as well. Emotions seem to be contagious, with the higher intensity ones, such as anger and frustration, leading to longer lasting negative effects.

For Boekaerts (2005), this means that students will attempt to reach their goals in order to be successful at school and beyond while keeping an inner sense of wellbeing, attempting to have positive emotions and outcomes to a situation. She called her idea a Model of Adaptive Learning. The model asserts that emotions provide energy and impact attention, recall, event interpretation, decision-making, and problem solving. In measuring positive and negative emotive states, she found that the higher the magnitude of positive emotion experienced when a task is completed, the higher the student will judge their performance, and vice-versa. Emotions are complex, structured phenomena that are attached to the environment (Moffat & Frijda, 2000). "They are socially constructed, personally enacted ways of being that emerge from conscious or unconscious judgments about the likelihood one will achieve goals or meet personal standards during transactions, situated within socio-historical contexts" (Schutz et al., 2004, p. 67). Thus, emotion, cognition, and action are connected. The elementary classroom is a small microcosm of emotional intensity (Hargraves, 2000). As such, it is important to understand the emotional states, landscapes, and experiences created by schools and perceived by students.

You and Schallert (1992) found that the content of class discussions influenced student's emotions. Emotions affected how students phrased their questions and comments. In converse, emotions were affected by how others reacted to questions or

comments. Emotions influenced each part of the discussion and classroom experience. Schallert, Reed, Fowler, and Lissi (1993) looked at how students were affected by emotional reactions to the classroom. Specifically, they asked what particular affective factors of classroom discourse influenced the students' perceptions of the social environment. Like You and Schallert (1992), they found students had strong emotional reactions to each other. Do and Schallert (2004) posit a similar idea, but additionally provide intimate examples of emotions as catalysts for how a student changes and reacts from one action and instance to another during a discussion. For example, while listening to a discussion, if a negative emotion accumulates within a student, she is likely to tune out from the discussion all together. Each action that a person takes within a context is full of reactions, often emotional. Thus, as Boekaerts (2002) claims that it is essential to have knowledge of the personal goals and experiences of students to promote knowledge of how and why they regulate themselves as they do.

Besides emotions causing possible academic and psychological disequilibrium, emotions are also associated with engagement and enjoyment of learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described an internal state he called *flow* conducive to positive emotional well-being. *Flow* refers to the state an individual is in when time seems to zip by, outside distractions go unnoticed, and one is completely enrapt in the task at hand. This deep involvement is not only motivating (Schallert & Reed, 1997) but also positive. It incites feelings of success and personal fulfillment, both positive affective states.

Because of the importance of experiences to our emotional reactions, context plays an important role in the affective relationships we have. Therefore studying how emotions are experienced in the classroom, in the worlds and through the identities of children is important and key to understanding how and why they act as they do. As Hargraves (2000) stated, "Emotions are not peripheral to people's lives; they are life" (p. 812). For these children, emotions were certainly not peripheral; instead they were experience. Perception was truth.

Power and Authority in the Classroom

As is true with any qualitative study, it happens that literature not initially foreseen as relevant is thrown into prominence as the data was examined. For my study, a category responding to power emerged during data analysis and led me to look in the research on power to frame the participants' experiences. My use of the word *power* has particular meaning in this text. For this study, power is defined as the resources a **teacher** uses to dominate or gain authority in the classroom. The teacher controls these resources. Although I am aware that there are many other sources of power in a classroom and that students can have power and be empowered, the students in this study spoke specifically about their perceptions of their teachers' perceived power and the issues surrounding it. As such, the literature that follows looks at ways teachers have been described to situate themselves as authorities in the classroom, and the behaviors they exhibit as means of control.

One such theorist who looked at the ways teachers exhibited power and its result was Horowitz (1956). He suggested that when a person's sense of social power is reduced or threatened, hostility is expressed. In his experiment, Horowitz looked at the ways students reacted to the accusation of "cheating" from which he concluded that when students feel threatened, they would attempt to assert power in retaliation. The manifestation of this retaliation causes what he called a *counterattack* that is used to reestablish his or her sense of power, to achieve a new equilibrium. Horowitz found that when a teacher reduced her students sense of power, student's felt the need to counter the reductionist motion of the teacher in what he called "hostile" ways. The degree the hostile counterattack was a direct index to the degree in the reduction of the students' sense of power. The aggression was more intense and seemingly more physical when power restoration did not occur or was repressed or suppressed by the student. He stated that, "The expression of hostility may well be a cue to teachers that they have been deemed autocratic by their students" (p. 67). Although implicative for teachers who walk a fine line between autocracy and anarchy, it is also important for students in terms of

their recognition of themselves as powerful as they enact or restrain their attitudes and beliefs in the classroom.

The idea of power and the assertion of retaliation through hostility runs parallel to one of the first studies I found looking at domination or control in the classroom. Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) established three kinds of groups for eleven year-olds, each under a different kind of leadership: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Each group was subjected to three kinds of leadership. That is, each child and each leader participated in each experience with the three styles of leadership. In the autocratic situation, the leader was not unfriendly but would tell the group what to do and how to do it. They would make all judgments about how to progress. In the democratic group, the members of the group, including the leader, determined the goals and means of production for the activity. For the final scenario, the leader only answered questions and made no suggestions. In the autocratic group, hostility in the forms of refusal, destruction, or yelling occurred 186 times, and in the democratic group, merely six times. Further, when the children from the autocratic group transferred to a differing kind of leadership, their behavior changed too, with children who before were seemingly hostile in the autocratic group becoming friendly, and vice versa. When the transitions were made, the group moving from a democracy to an authoritarian scenario struggled the most, taking the longest to come around to being successful participants in the new way of being. This study was replicated in 1973 with the same results. Findings showcase the complexities and struggles children engage with as they move from one kind of power enacted in a classroom to another kind the following year. Also telling is the difficulties inherent in others' domination which almost certainly leads to negative situations. By acknowledging such struggles, we are helped to better understand their struggles.

Although it is important to recognize one's power as a teacher in the classroom, it is also paramount to understand that not all teacher power is inherently negative. Brophy and Good (1986) suggest that students who spent most of their time being instructed by the teachers or working independently under supervision from the teacher made greater gains in achievement (as measured on standardized testing) than those who spent much of

their time in non academic activities or in learning situations on their own. Furthermore, these effects were elaborated by interactions with student ability regardless of other high-stakes testing predictors such as "SES." With this in mind, Brophy and Good summarize the key findings from over three decades about teacher behaviors and their relation with one another:

1. *Opportunity to Learn/Content Covered*. Amount learned is related to the opportunity to learn, whether measured in terms of curriculum pages covered or percentage of test items taught through lecture or recitation.
2. *Achievement.* Achievement is maximized when teachers emphasize academic instruction as a major part of their own role, expect their students to master the curriculum, and allocate most of the available time to curriculum-related activities.
3. *Classroom Management/Academic Learning Time.* To learn efficiently, students must be engaged in activities that are appropriate in difficulty level and suited to their current achievement levels and needs.
4. *Active Teaching*. Students achieve more in classes where they spend most of their time being taught or supervised by their teachers rather than working on their own.

(p. 360-366)

From the above statements, in regards to power, Brophy and Good (1986) argue that teachers need to be in charge of the ways that students use their time. Academic learning is influenced by the amount of time that students spend engaged in appropriate academic tasks and students learn more effectively when their teachers help structure the information for them, provide the bridges to their current known knowledge, and monitor their understandings such that they can provide appropriate feedback during classroom activities.

Defenders of a teacher dominated classroom (e.g. Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986; Mackey, Glenn, and Lewis, 1977) stress three main arguments. First, they say that the teacher is a more knowledgeable other and as such is much more expert in the subject matter than the students. Because of her position as knowledge holder, it could be said that she might assume the bulk of the responsibility for what takes place. Second, they argue that there has to be control and it would make sense that with the teacher's maturity and sense of societal norms, she would be in charge of the classroom, its main norm-

setter and enforcer (Gorman, 1974). Third, teachers are by no means the ogres and frown-faced villains they are stereotyped as, but instead just want an atmosphere in which student learning and reflection can occur (Gorman, 1974). A teacher's intentions are inherently good. Although perhaps true in the best of situations, in the worst of situations, the words and stereotypical posits about teacher-as-dominator can be true. As Gordon continued, "If a teacher can teach the whole class how to deal with its process level (the ways the students can be successful), as well as the content that must be learned, she will have taught the students the key to a rich educational experience" (p. 94) that will not only increase learning potential but expand the students and their capacities for critical engagement and authentic learning. Gorman went on to say that if learning authority and power is given to students and facilitated by teachers through interest, integration, and accountability, students will find a personal relevance for education, have higher levels of participation and self-direction, feel more responsibility for their behavior and learning outcomes, and learn about the world and themselves, creating a positive interaction between learning and knowledgeable others.

Bourdieu (1977) used the term *capitol* to discuss social power. He argues that within a particular field, people carry or exert power according to how the field is structured. These particular fields he called, *habitus* and they encompassed speaking (and thinking) as well as the sense one has of the value of what one is saying or adding in the environment. This definition of power echoes the notions of particular *figured worlds* that Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) speak of as having, "institutionalized structure of power that extends beyond the immediate order of interaction" (pg. 57). Holland, et al. (1998) argued that all figured worlds take on rank and status, what they call *positional identities*. Those identities are dependent on others present as well as access to certain worlds or spaces. Local, personal figured worlds have, inherent within them, power (Holland, et al., 1998).

Bahktin (1986) also spoke of the nature of social spaces containing power influences, which he labeled *positionality*. He defined such positionality as social valuing, saying that speakers are aware of how their utterances and elicitations are being

taken by others. This positionality, social valuing, or power in classrooms speaks to the ways that the teacher, as an authority figure, has the task of manifesting personal and perceived student power in her classroom. Her manifestation constructs the community.

Fordham (1993) drew from a long-term study of Washington D.C. students to show that when the discourse practices and personal traits of the individual were unlike those in authority, namely the teacher, students attempted to adopt "passing" attitudes. Children understand what it means to fit in and will do what is necessary to do so. She further identified the development of attitudes and patterns of interaction that were self-contradicting of the values the students had presented at the beginning. The girls adopted attitudes that would allow them to "align" with the beliefs and actions of the majority, especially those of the teacher. In a sense, the power of the teacher in positioning the female students' selves forced those who would come to be accepted to silence previous identities in lieu of more personally successful ones. These notions are similar to those Delpit (1995) found in her studies looking at the interaction patterns of African American children in the home and school contexts. She found that there were different expectations as well as ways beliefs and understandings were conveyed and that school did not provide any continuity from which students' home and school life could coexist. She thus responded that African-American students and other teachers were taught teaching methodologies that were supposedly empowering to the students and their communities, in fact were disempowering. She was criticized for such a stance because of its conjectural "explicitness." She ultimately states that teachers of students of color need to increase their knowledge and implementation of curriculum and pedagogy that have been shown to be effective with students of color. She asserts that imbalances exist in the American classroom, particularly in the increasingly diverse urban setting of the public schools, and that African Americans and other people of color often get the short end of the stick when it comes to commanding and exercising power in educational settings and teachers have power to bridge the learning of children between colors and contexts.

Fordham (1993) found in her study that young women who developed an oppositional stance toward schooling and authority, who refused to change themselves according to the rules of the schooling world, and instead remain what they perceived as true to themselves ultimately were seen as trouble, hostile, or defiant students. Like Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) stated, "Children in their development and neophytes entering into a figured world, then, acquire positional dispositions and identities…they come to know these signs as claims to categorical and relational positions, to status, [and power] (p. 142)." Bourdieu (1977) claimed this was what occurred when students learned "the game" required for participation in each world. Through interaction with a certain world, individuals develop attitudes, dispositions, notions of their agency, and emotions about themselves in relation to what they can say, do, and think in certain figured worlds.

More recently, Delpit (1995) illustrated that the ways that teachers utilize power in classrooms is not always negative, especially for children of color and of minority student status. She addressed her concerns that she be mistaken to mean that direct instruction for such children is what is needed and instead, claims that by allowing unfacilitated exploration and self-initiated starts on projects and activities, students felt denied access to the teacher as the source of knowledge they needed to be successful. Rather than claiming that teachers have ultimate power, her subjects believe that teacher power is vital to providing students access to their own voices, to student empowerment. As Heath (1983) explained, the authoritarian ways of minority teachers' discourse patterns (such as directives) are often seen as uncaring and mean. Instead, she proposes it is a way of making interaction at school in line with the home lives of the students they teach. In her view, it is important that there be balance between process and prescription. Through analysis of the process of schooling, Bendelow and Mayall (2002) analyzed the role of emotional learning in sustaining a balanced and healthy lifestyle in relation to children's self-identities, particularly that of the role of a student. Their data show that children understand their subordination to adults as well as the roles emotions can play in the negotiation of such hierarchical relationships. Thus leads one to ask how teachers

facilitate this relationship building in school. Such connections between school, emotional lives, and power to those home and community relationships are important and sustaining to the missions and goals of both students and schools.

Grant and Wieczorek (2000) discussed such connectors through positing that teachers need to be explicitly taught how to make bridges from the academic discussion and the social milieus in which children live. They provided *social mooring* as a response to how to handle such a lofty task. Through social mooring, people are shown how to enlarge their frames of reference to take into account historical, institutional, social, and cultural perspectives, and with the enlarged frames, to discuss views and problems they find evident therein. The ways society, and specifically teachers, view students are the result of the effects of power relationships, and more specifically, the ways we perceive what social capital each has in the classroom. The higher the student is judged to be on a continuum of a personal "norm," the better the relationship that develops is likely to be. The way a label is given and viewed is equated to the norm of a power relationship. So, in a classroom, the ways the children are seen are associated with the ways they are treated, the power they are given, how their previous identities are accepted.

If the ways we label and describe teachers and their relationship to power equates to the ways the classroom world is negotiated (Delpit, 1995; Fordham, 1993; Heath, 1983), Jeanpierre's (2004) discussion of how power in the classroom is mediated by the ways that the teacher ordained has illustrative implications for the ways the teacher claims and asserts her power. Jeanpierre found in her study of two urban elementary classrooms, that the interplay between student interaction and classroom management styles (authoritarian, i.e. coercive, versus intrinsic, i.e. aim to increase self-control) did not play as big a part in the achievement of the students as did the quality of their teaching. She found that neither of the teachers' classroom management styles procured positive interaction styles and that the student's perception of the classroom manifested the ways they engaged with both the content and the teacher. Thus, it was said to be the student's perceptions of the role of the teacher that manifested certain achievement outcomes and not individual teacher power initiatives.

Bloome et al. (2005) illustrated power as two differing models: that of product and that of process. Through a careful look at discourse, they asserted that when power is a product, it is a commodity, something to be bought and sold by those in power to those who "need it…and are deficit" in some perceived way (p. 161). As such, everyone without power wants it and seeks its capital at any cost. In the process view, the view they espouse as a better explanation, power is seen as contextual and experiential, shifting from venue to venue and structured by those who are members of each context. As such, power is defined by the venues one is in (Foucault, 1970) as well as is inherent in every situation to which one is a part. Power as inherent in each situational experience is important to note for this study because, like Jeanpierre (2004) and Foucault (1970), this study asked people to question who is empowered and disempowered, to see that power lives within the interactions and relationships of people. It posits that power does not exist in a vacuum. The way power is wielded by the teachers in this study affects the relationships the children build in the fifth grade world. The construction of social identities is influenced by social, cultural, and political events and also beliefs beyond the classroom. They are manifest through the classroom's socio-political environment (teacher's pet, class rank, etc.), who has power, who wants power, and who is oppressed, and also shaped in the moment-by-moment events unfolding in each classroom.

Eisner (2000) spoke of power differently than Bloome (2005) arguing that teachers and other adults are in a position of power, yet with the possibility of positive monitoring and helping possible. Teachers, are given the role of interpreting the quality of the student's questions, the insight of her answers, the degree of her understanding, the engagement she displays in her work, and even the level of critical thinking. With such power, teachers and adults become the primary authorities on what is right, wrong, as well as good or bad. The more neophyte the student is to the particulars of a context, the more the teacher's power necessitates certain outcomes; the way she wields her power indicative of the outcome.

Wodak and Meyer (2001) cite Anthonissen's views (2001) on the inherent power in language. Although Anthonissen spoke of the power of language in the media and its

supposed transparency, Wodak and Meyer use the same constructs to contend that domain-specific language contains within it, power and that, “discourses express societal power relations, which in turn are impacted by discourses” (p. 21), a Leontievian (1984) idea. She stated that, “Discourses are only comprehensible in different discourse strands (composed of discourse fragments from the same subject)” (p. 22), in different Discourse domains. Discourse positions itself in unique different ways and structures itself to have certain prowess (societal backing). Some language and interaction patterns are elevated and therefore retain differing amounts of power over others. The hypothetical question to ask here is: Do we give children’s language power? How do we position them in schools and as learners?

The nature of the social order (primarily noted as teacher-dominant) within elementary schools, and the centrality of emotional learning to children's everyday lives and relationships, along with the transitions that must occur, play active roles in the ways students construct who they are. The classroom is a battlefield of sorts, between teachers, between children, between the unnamed other stakeholders. The research presented is but a short piece attempting to show that power in the classroom contains both the good and the ugly when inexplicit goals and intentions are concerned. Different experiences and subcultures fuel such a war between generations, positions, and values. Power as its intention is perceived (either for the good or bad) as the potential to critically influence the ways children see themselves as members of the classroom and can ultimately fashion the ways they feel about schooling and in particular, teachers.

Chapter 3

Method

This chapter presents the description of methods and procedures applied in developing and completing the study. It is divided into five sections. First, I will discuss the overall rationale and approach for this study. Second, I will discuss the research site and participants and third, the data sources and data collection, documentation, and record-keeping procedures. Phases of the study will be outlined as an overview in this section as well. Fourth, I will discuss sampling decisions and methods of data analysis including protocol used to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

Overall Approach and Rationale

Although studies have highlighted the issues with which students wrestle and must overcome during transitions from school to school, it is fair to say that because they looked at adjustment as it translated between schools and thus, separate whole academic structures, transition studies have most often focused not so much on the experience of individual students, but on contextual and systemic differences. While these studies investigated important far-reaching adjustments, the more subtle, nuanced transitions that occur as students move between classrooms within the same school have not been explored. My study investigates the challenges, compromises, and successes that students have as they reposition themselves in new classrooms and grade levels. In particular, it approaches the experience of transition as dynamic, negotiated, and interwoven in the structures, people, and contexts within which individuals are placed, and demonstrates that transitions from classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher, while seemingly mundane, are in fact complex. It seeks to show how individual students negotiate their transition journey.

Because I was interested in understanding the ways students experience the first months of school and thus, their transition, as well as how they negotiate successes and challenges within the new classroom context, a qualitative approach was taken. As Straus and Corbin (1998) recommended, "qualitative methods can be used to obtain intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods" (p. 11). Using an interpretivist/constructivist approach, research is conducted by those who want to understand the world from the point of view of those who live it. According to Mertens (1998), interpretivist/constructivist researchers reject the notion that there is one objective reality that can be known and instead take the stance that a researcher's goal is to, "understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge" (p. 11). The interpretivist/constructivist approach allows the construction of meaning and understanding through the data. In order to understand better the effect transitions have on particular children, it is necessary to situate the actions and roles within the context in which they occur.

Within the interpretivist/constructivist perspective, a case study methodology was used to gather and understand the data. "A case study is a method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance taken as a whole and in its context (The U.S. General Accounting Office, 1990, p. 14). This study encompasses the following case study characteristics, as described by Mertens (1998):

1. It heavily relies on the interaction between the context and the individual.
2. The nature of the case and context is of particular importance.
3. The historical background of the individual and the context influences the perceived outcomes.

And lastly, from Stake (1994):

4. The more bounded and specific the object of study is, the greater the rationale for a case study approach.

Case studies will allow for an in-depth view of the individual children included in the study as well as help to show the ground from which the theories were derived.

Erickson (1986) indicated that interpretive methods are particularly appropriate when the nature of the study is an attempt to describe what is happening in a particular place. Accordingly, I used an interpretivist/constructivist methodology for this study such that the personal experiences of students would be captured, as much as possible, in their words and through their worlds.

Site Selection

The study was conducted at Radliff Elementary School [a pseudonym] in Austin, Texas with approximately twelve former fourth grade students entering the fifth grade at the start of the 2006-2007 school year and their new fifth grade teachers, Ms. Beaches and Ms. Bloom and a newly hired teacher, Ms. Markowitz [pseudonyms]. Radliff Elementary is located in the northeast side of Austin and has an enrollment of 1000 students. The school is considered a community school and as such, the entire population comes from the surrounding two-mile radius. No school buses, other than for special education students, are utilized to bring students to or from school. Fifty-six percent of the population at Radliff is considered limited English proficient or English language learners (ELL's). Eighty-nine percent of the students are considered economically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced lunch. Of the 1000 students, 70.1% are Hispanic, 21.6% are African American, 7.3% are Caucasian, 1% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and .4% are identified as other. The category of mixed background, or bi-racial affiliation is not noted on the school's demographic profile.

As previously mentioned, this study was conducted with twelve entering fifth grade students in Ms. Beaches, Ms. Bloom, and Ms. Markowitz's fifth grade classrooms, with cases growing from both my experiences with the participants as a fourth grade teacher during their fourth grade year, as well as that of the fifth grade students' personal accounted experiences. For purposes of this study, they will be called focal students. Because of the nature of my role as well as the nature of school, those showing interest in my research were not turned away. As such, there were up to four additional children attending and participating in the focus groups, journal writing activities, and artistic

expressions. Students such as these are called participants. Permission was granted for all children and parents of participant students Both Ms. Beaches and Ms. Bloom taught fifth grade in a vertical team aligned with my fourth grade classroom during the school year of 2005-2006. Thus, I have known both teachers for the last year. Ms. Markowitz was newly hired from Arizona to the faculty for the school year 2006-2007. The students chosen for this study came from the above three classrooms. It is important to note that there are two samples here: a purposeful sample from my classroom and a random sample from the other two fourth grade teachers' classrooms. Participants from my classroom were chosen because they exemplified an interesting journey in the year I knew them. They had to meet several criteria including having a difficult academic past (identified through grades before grade 4), a difficult behavioral past (identified through teacher comments and experiences including fourth) and increased success in the fourth grade in one or both of the aforementioned categories. Samples from the other 4th grade classrooms were randomly chosen from a classroom list with children who had moved being exempted. All samples consisted of English speaking fourth graders who represented exited ELL program or general education program participants, meaning that the students used in this study are those whom have exited, or never entered, a bilingual or ELL program. Namely, they are English speakers. The fifth grade teachers who participated in this study exemplified the characteristics of a labeled "general education" program, meaning that they were not a labeled Special Education or ESL (English as a Foreign Language Program). Because of Radliff's population being mostly Hispanic identified children, the Spanish language is plentiful, and as such, many classrooms are bilingual or EFL. Because of my need to have English-speaking children, the participating children were chosen from the populations labeled as "general education."

Participants

Participants included previous fourth grade students/entering fifth grade students and their three receiving fifth grade teachers. Three previous fourth grade teachers were participants in a limited and initial consultation role. I participated as both a former fourth

grade teacher and as the researcher. As such, I acted as a deeper and more involved participant the study than any other fourth grade teacher.

Students

A list of approximately 40 students was generated based on language status (are they English fluent?) and which teacher's classroom they would enter (chosen by the principal during the summer). From this list, students were placed into groups based on the classroom teacher they had last year. By placing the students in groups based on previous teacher, equivalent numbers from each classroom could be chosen. The teacher with the fewest included students had four and therefore, four were chosen from each of the other three fourth grade room. This process allowed a range of prior experiences and classroom contexts to be showcased. Because I spent last year as a fourth grade classroom teacher and my insider knowledge about the teachers and students from which they were leaving, I was also able to identify those students from the list who story themselves in troubled ways, for whom a profound teacher-student connection was forged, or for which connection was seemingly absent. Interesting previous experiences in fourth grade such as those mentioned could perhaps challenge their transition from context to context and teacher to teacher. As such from the list, 12 were chosen to participate.

As mentioned, twelve students were asked to participate in the study. Important in their inclusion would be their ability to stay after school once per month and guardian permission. All twelve students assented and all guardians agreed.

Table 1: Focal Students' Background Information

Name	Sex	Age	Family Heritage	Previous Teacher	Current Teacher
Aaron	M	10	Hispanic	Ms. Wilson	Ms. Beaches
Bette	F	10	Hispanic	Ms. Gypsy	Ms. Bloom
Bruce	M	10	Caucasian	Ms. Bobbie	Ms. Beaches
C.C.	F	11	Hispanic/Caucasian	Ms. Bobbie	Ms. Beaches

Clementine	F	11	African American	Ms. Gypsy	Ms. Beaches
Daniel	M	10	African American	Ms. Wilson	Ms. Markowitz
Dixie	F	11	Hispanic	Ms. Wilson	Ms. Markowitz
Martin	M	10	Hispanic	Ms. Wilson	Ms. Markowitz
Rose	F	11	Hispanic	Ms. Wilson	Ms. Bloom
Sophie	F	10	African American	Ms. Bobbie	Ms. Bloom
Stella	F	11	Hispanic/Caucasian	Ms. Gypsy	Ms. Bloom
Tzeitel	F	10	African American	Ms. Wilson	Ms. Bloom

Brief Initial Participant Bios

Because one of this study's goals is to give legitimacy and voice to students' thoughts, experiences and feelings about their worlds, and to see firsthand how their identities are developed over time, I will include initial participant abstracts. These short biographies were written during the first focus group that occurred the second day of school. The students were asked to, "Write a short paragraph about you in school." Together with me we discussed the prompt and what it might include. Ideas were kept on a large tablet and displayed during the activity. It included, "Who you are as a student, what you like, what you don't like, what race/ethnicity you identify yourself as, and how you feel about school." The following brief personal biographies are those vignettes verbatim, although spelling errors have been corrected.

Aaron: I hate school, except for last year. Last year was the BOMB. I am a bad student, but smart. No one knows it though because I am so bad. Ms. Wilson knew it and got all over me when I wasn't doing my bestest. I got into the GT program because of her but now I am out of her room and in Hell. This teacher thinks I am shit. She is crazy but thinks I am because of what she thought of me in the halls last year or something. I am

Hispanic, speak Spanish and English perfectly and like to skateboard and all sports. I am good at everything but being good.

Bette: I was born into a family who speaks Spanish but I learned English in one year. I am the oldest of four children; the youngest was born a week ago! He says, "Waaa!" all the time. I walk to school with my mom and brothers and I walk home with my brothers. My dad is a mechanic and my mom is a good mom. I am a good student and am very smart at all the subjects. I don't like Social Studies. I wish the world didn't have hungry war people in it.

Bruce: I don't know who I am but I am smart. I just work slow sometimes but follow the rules and regulations good. I am white. I wear glasses and am skinny…really skinny but faster than a roller coaster in my running. I passed all my TAKS last year. That's all.

C.C.: My name is C.C. and I am going to tell you about me. I am 11 years old and am a Mexican German. I don't speak German but I want to know how and might learn on the computer tomorrow. I like school a lot because otherwise you get bored at home. I want to be in this research group a lot. I hope this is the right thing to say here. I have a dog name Puddles. I think school should be fun so kids want to come and can learn a lot more when it is fun. That way, we can have learning be fun. That is my piece of advice.

Clementine: The time of my birth was 10am. I was born at a good time in the morning. That is what my dad tells me is that I was not too late and not too early but just right. That is how I am in school. I am not the smartest and not the dumbest. I am just right. I work hard at my work and study every night. I read for my reading sheet 30 minutes each night. It isn't easy but I get things with work ethics. I will make a good adult. Sometimes white people have to work hard and I am white.

Daniel: I am smart and make good grades like A's and B's. I've made one C before for not turning in a worksheet on the rainforest but it was really lost and I lost the makeup sheet too. I learned to be strong and not cry last year. I tested it in Nigeria, because I am black, this summer and it worked. Being strong is what a man should be but not too strong. It is okay to ask for help too. I like writing about fun things like Pokemon

and aliens. I don't like writing about a black box or my worst day ever. I like making books. I want to be a doctor when I grow up, but not like Ms. Wilson, one that fixes people's AIDS. My goal is to learn to use periods.

Dixie: I'm from Mexico but I was in Ms. Wilson's class and then I left but I missed it a lot so I came back. Now I am in Ms. Markowitz's class. She is nice but I think it was better last year because I came back here to be in Ms. Wilson's class and now I am not. I am smart and like to do reading and mathematics, especially fractions. The teacher always thinks I am trusting because they tell the substitute. I am nice and have friends like Rose. I want to be a professora when I grow up and help teachers like Ms. Wilson does now.

Martin: I like to talk and move around a lot. When I am in a class that lets me wiggle then I can be a good student. Like in kindergarten when there are centers or fourth grade. I guess I am smart. My friends are Daniel and Bruce. We like to play Pokemon. I hate writing and reading. I love math and algebra. Algebra group was the best last year. I can't like this year yet but I hope it gets better because I am crazy in there already. I am 10 and have a sister who looks like me. She is in 2nd grade. I love the computer. I have B-A-D handwriting so cursive is going to suck. I am Mexican.

Rose: I am ten years old but my birthday is coming in one month, two days and some hours. Then I will be 11 years old. I am an animal person and Hispanic. I like math and science the best because of experiments but school is great. In science you can learn about reading and writing. I loved last year because my teacher was so caring and special and she made us be caring and everyone special. My best friends were in my class last year but not this year. I have one sister, three dogs, two cats, five hermit crabs, fish, and am the auntie of another dog. I want to be a vet when I grow up.

Sophie: I am a good student with good grades. Some would say I am smart. I am also in choir, basketball, and church youth group. I am very tall and am Black. Being tall makes me good at basketball. Being black makes me good at basketball too. I want to be a psychologist and an author when I grow up and go to college. I think school should be interesting, not boring. This year will be hard in math I hope.

Stella: Hi! My name is Stella. It is sort of a weird name but pretty. My birth mom gave it to me. I love school. I feel sad because I had to leave my teacher and friends just when I was liking it and getting smarter. My teacher made me pass the TAKS test in math and I didn't in third grade. I learned all my facts. I am a good reader and read everything, so much I can't stop because I am liking to too much. Sometimes my teachers think I am a baby but I get hurt in my feelings sometimes a lot. I am white. Thank you for listening.

Tzeitel: I am from Liberia but I moved to America from Ghana. I think I am a real African and American. I love American school. I like the children and the teachers. They are caring and nice. They want us to learn things. They are kind. I love school and my friends. I am getting better at it at Radliff School. My English is good now and I am wanting to take the test this time. I will bring pride to Ms. Wilson and my other teachers.

All of the 12 students took the initial survey and responded to all items. All 12 students participated in pre-school interviews held on the campus of the elementary school or at the home of the participants as chosen by the guardian. In addition to the 12 students who were asked to participate, 2-3 other students attended focus groups at each meeting. Permission was sought and granted to include their data. As such occasional names like Mona or Frederica are included when their data as a participant added to the focus at hand or the theme being illuminated. Because of my tenure at Radliff Elementary, additional students regularly asked to and participated in focus groups, "because they have things to add," as one student said during a lunchtime in which I was visiting.

As each of these students enters a new classroom context, with new friends, new teachers, and new negotiations to be made, it becomes interesting to see how they handle themselves as well as seemingly important to investigate the challenges, compromises, and successes that students have as they reposition themselves in new classrooms and grade levels.

Teachers

The three teachers identified for this study are Ms. Beaches, Ms. Bloom, and Ms. Markowitz, all current teachers at Radliff Elementary. Ms. Beaches has been a teacher for over eight years, and a teacher of fifth grade for four, all at Radliff. Ms. Bloom has been a teacher for over 15 years, the last seven at Radliff, with 10 years experience in fifth grade. Ms. Markowitz has experience of 3 years in Arizona where she taught 7th and 8th grade. All three teachers are considered "general education" teachers (meaning they are English speaking only) although in all three classrooms there are former ELL and special education students, including gifted and talented. These teachers agreed to participate in the study and engaged in an interview prior to the onset of the year. This interview asked about their experiences as a teacher and as a student and attempted to locate goals, aspirations, expectations, and ideas about the coming year.

Therefore, the personal and individual experiences carry weight and importance to the structure of the study. To get at this understanding, individual interviews were held with each student, one in the summer before school started and four more during the course of the beginning months of school. In addition, journals were given and kept by all participants on a "want to" basis (although all were encouraged). Parents were interviewed at the beginning and end of the study in attempts to get another perspective on the transition. Focus groups were held four times, at the end of each month, wherein participants met in the library of the school to discuss and extrapolate their experiences. During these focus groups, discussion were taped and later transcribed. Because it is important that children have varied methods to share their experiences, art was also encouraged. Large paper was provided and possible prompts/ideas were given. Students had choice to draw, write, or discuss with each other for the first half of the focus group. Additionally, surveys were given during the summer and at the beginning of the final focus group and naturalistic observation of the classrooms was done over the course of the semester to capture the nature of the classroom and relationships as described by the students. Many methods and data sources inform this study.

All three fourth grade teachers were new the year they taught at Radliff Elementary. Ms. Wilson had two previous years of teaching experience in an urban, low SES school in Dallas, Texas with five years of fieldwork experience in schools with student teachers. Ms. Gypsy had two years of experience in an urban, low SES school in Baltimore and Ms. Bobbie had four years of private school teaching experience in Austin, Texas.

My Role as a Teacher, Facilitator, and Observer

I was a former teacher at Radliff Elementary. As such, I knew of all of the students involved in this study. Four of the students came from my classroom. Although the summer months had passed, my experiences with and among the students were varied and overlapping, including as their own classroom teacher, the teacher next door or across the hall, reading teacher (one student came to my room for advanced guided reading), after-school tutor, and kickball coach, the normal roles teachers play at a school they have worked. This study however, was particular in its need for a researcher who was able to provide a safe place for discussion and sharing and thus had developed a relationship in which that was established. However, this study positions me as a teacher who left the classroom and returned as a researcher. As a researcher, I was not in power to make decisions pertaining to grades, testing, or school life. I specifically noted this to the children each time I met with them as will become apparent in their discourse.

I acted as both a participant and observer during this study. As a participant I facilitated discussion during focus group meetings and engaged in conversation during interviews and various school visits at lunchtime and after school. During those times I attempted to position myself as a friend who was at the same time their former teacher. For me this meant that I could have some of the authority given to me by my tenure at Radliff Elementary such as being able to wander the school and chat as possible (even when the cafeteria was on silence) and yet be nonjudgmental and safe, as they would later call me, “cool.” Although that was perhaps a term they would have used to describe me as their teacher last year (some did in interviews), I think that my new role as a

participant in their transition positioned me to be more able to get the depth and quality of response I needed. My observation time in the three classrooms was to be primarily observation. As an observer, I attempted to come to their classrooms, entering through the door as stealth as possible. My goal was to be completely unobtrusive and to say nothing, nor make eye contact with any student. This worked well in one of the classrooms for the entire time I visited. In another classroom this was completely out of the question and kids would say hello, hug me, and even bring me work to check over. My role was that of a participant in the focus groups and only an observer in the classrooms. Although I entered the classroom with silence and ease, I was at the front upon entrance. As such, the teacher often acknowledged my existence and at times, talked directly to me in the middle of lessons. Because of our similar experience as graduate students (she left graduate school in pharmacy), she often had graduate school politics to share. This at first seemed a positive situation for me as a researcher, wherein I felt accepted as a part of the classroom. Yet, after one attempt to help a student with autism cut out a square, I was reprimanded harshly in front of the children and became solely an observer, entering and exiting with limited contact during class time.

Field Entry

Negotiations for the implementation of this study began in the spring of 2006. After completing a year of tenure at Radliff Elementary while working on my doctoral degree, I approached the principal on several occasions, in school and out of school, about the possibilities of studying the movement that my current fourth graders would make as they left fourth grade and entered fifth grade. She was interested in how to help facilitate this transition smoothly and informally agreed on more than one occasion to allow me entrance the following year in her school for such a study.

Upon IRB and AISD approval, I officially contacted the principal of the school, the fifth grade teachers, and the guardians of each of the students on the telephone. From those initial contacts, face-to-face meetings were proposed for late July/early August to inform the teachers and the guardians of the particulars of the potential study, answer any

questions they might have, and to seek formal, written consent (Appendix D). These meetings occurred at a time chosen by the guardian at the school in a closed room or the school library. At this time, guardians received a written summary of the study and all consent forms. All guardians were informed of their rights as participants and told of their free will to deny consent. Guardians were told that their child could still participate in all aspects of the research project, including written journals and focus group meetings should they refuse formal consent for use of their child's data. It was made clear to the students and guardians through oral and written communication that: (1) participation in the study was voluntary; (2) participants could withdraw at any time; (3) interviews, discussions, and audiotapes would be kept confidential, and (4) participants would be given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

All guardians consented for their children and their data to be a part of the study and all students assented. Following the discussion about the project, the interview was held with the guardian. This interview attempted to contextualize their experience as a student in school as well as their experience with their child as a student. Interviews were guided by questions (see Appendix A), but were open ended and sought no goal or end. I spoke with the guardians as if we were friends and not as researcher/participant roles. My goal was to induce reflection and thoughts about themselves as a student and their experiences in schools to invoke recollections about their child as a student as well as her prior experiences in school. Then, I spoke with the student for an individual interview concerning questions I had about other data, comments, or thoughts about their previous schooling experience, specifically in fourth grade (to see an example interview questionnaire, see Appendix B). The parent was then asked to move to another table where there were magazines and school pamphlets for them to read. Two parents opted to sit with their child.

Each of the fifth grade teachers consented to one interview and up to 15 observations. After one week, Ms. Beaches noted she would like a schedule of observation and focus group days. I then met with them during a planning meeting and

we scheduled days (and later times for Ms. Beaches who requested additional informing of my visitation). This schedule was made and agreed upon (Appendix C).

Phases of Inquiry

The following sections outline the timeline for this study. Although the study rose out of several months of inquiry, four phases, beginning in the summer of 2006, and ending in the spring of 2007occurred.

Phase 1: Study Initiation

Phase 1 of the study, face-to-face interviews of the teachers, parents, and students occurred in early August, after all necessary permissions were obtained. During this phase, which occurred before actual entry into the school, included notification and consultation of the guardian via telephone of my interest to work with their child in the coming semester. A face-to-face meeting of both the student and the parent was then negotiated to explain the project to the guardians, as well as to gain all necessary consents. A time was set and meetings with each dyad occurred.

The interviews were conducted and audio-taped. The purpose of this phase was to identify what the students expected about fifth grade, how parents expected their child to react to fifth grade, and how it perhaps differed from the previous fourth grade year (Appendix E). At the conclusion of the interview of the student, an attitude survey derived from Sa'di (2001) was given to the students (Appendix F). Sa'di (2001) created an attitudes survey specifically designed for primary school children aged 9-11 years. The design procedure included "logical and psychometric tests for reliability, power of discrimination, content, and construct validity and unidimensionality" (pg. 67). For Sa'di's study, held in Jordan with children aged 9-12, the differences between the mean scores were tested using the analysis of variance, which revealed significant differences between the mean scores of the three grade levels ($F=119.753$, $df=2$, $p>0.000$). The items for Sa'di's study were tested in a subject pool of approximately 221 students and were

modified and dropped as needed for suitability. My study used and modified some of his statements for suitability with students in the US, namely those at Radliff.

Like Sa'di (2001), the children in my study were allowed to decide their attitudes on a three-point Likert scale ('yes', 'don't know', 'no'). In addition, children were told that they could write in any additional comments or ideas next to each question. Two questions required penned answers. Each item on the scale contained a statement followed by blank boxes allowing students to check the appropriate choice for their beliefs. They were told to insert an X or a √ (a √ if they agreed that the statement was correct, or the X if they disagreed and felt the item incorrect). If they had no answer they left the whole item empty.

Item	Yes	Don't Know	No
1. I believe I could do more useful things than going to school.	√		X

Phase 2: Field Entry

When all necessary consent was granted, entry into the field occurred at the onset of Phase 2 on August 16th, the first day of school. During the first four weeks, I initiated two meetings after school with the students. The first meeting consisted of a one-hour discussion about their first day and was held in the library. It was at this first meeting that the students were able to see the others that would be participating. The students were told that they could write anything they wanted in the journals but that they would be collected twice by me and read. They were also told that all of the writing was confidential and between them and myself and that they could write as much or as little as they wanted. They were also told they could draw or paint. The journal was said to be a way for me to "see into the classroom" on days I was not there. Anything they wanted

me to know, they were told to write. At this time, journals were given. Later during the first collection of the journals on September 29, 2006, it was noted that many of the children had little text. In order to facilitate journal text production, I initiated *prize patrol* in which the top writers (based on numbers of pages) would be given a special prize at the next focus group. Text increased as a result.

Data was recorded during this phase in the form of intensive field notes with the projection that the first weeks of transition from teacher to teacher, context to context, and grade to grade, could potentially be a time of major shift and off-balance of prior classroom knowledge and experience.

Classroom observation began in early September, an hour per classroom once a week. Field notes, made brief during classroom observation, were then expanded daily. The time spent in each classroom would later decrease as focus became increasingly about the students' perceptions and less about my attempts to capture their realities.

Audio-taping was used during the interviewing and the focus groups in addition to field notes because it enabled me to have a more complete record of interactions. Because the interest of the study resides in the communication about the context, with nonverbal and verbal actions a part of the interpretation of a particular exchange (Edwards & Mercer, 1995), nonverbal communication (for example, gestures and body stance) as well as oral speech sometimes enabled the contextualization of the interaction or discussion. Field notes included such actions as much as possible. These were noted in parenthesis after the interview or focus group. For example, "Martin: Ahhh! (covers face and then splays self over table)," was written on a page to remind me during transcription to add in the nonverbal gesture.

My goal during the initial focus groups was to begin the examination of the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the students as they negotiated the terrain of a new classroom and as the new fifth grade teacher prepared them to be successful fifth graders in her classroom. Time after school allowed me to informally talk to them, without disrupting their transition, yet gather insight into their experience.

Phase 3: Narrowed Observation and Focus Group Meetings

Phase 3 of the study involved narrowing and focusing the exploration of transition to significant events. It attempted to locate how the students positioned themselves in their writing and how they negotiated the terrain of fifth grade. During this time, hypotheses were developed and initial thoughts about how the students were experiencing the transition were refined. Time in the classroom also narrowed in focus, going from one hour per week to about 20 minutes per week. During this phase of the study it became apparent that the participants' experiences of transition and the practice of schooling were of the utmost importance, time as an outside observer in the classrooms diminished. The notion that a person's truth is the truth became the motto of our focus group as well as one by which the study became situated.

This phase of the study lasted from Weeks 4 through 8 and included time in the classroom (although lessened over time), time in focus group meetings (2 ½ hours at the end of the month of October) and short conversations after school and during lunch. I made sure to visit Radliff at least once a week during lunch and after school, often giving kids a ride home and informally talking over a Dr. Pepper about their thoughts, feelings, and comments about the day.

Although initially all three teachers opted to act as member checkers with me, as the year progressed, all three decided they did not want to add any extra time onto their already tight after school tutoring schedules. As such, by weeks 4 and 5, none were able to meet. Because I still wanted to utilize someone as a member checker who knew the participants, I member checked with the school's principal as well as a former 4th grade teacher. Both of these people acted as a preliminary sounding board for hypothesis and assertions arising through data gathering. In addition to those who knew the students, I met weekly with a former teacher and graduate student to further talk about the data. Lastly, I conversed with two professors about themes and categories, ideas, and thoughts I was finding through the data gathering process. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the students acted as debriefers with me, often answering questions I had

about thoughts they raised during previous interviews or focus group meetings. All of the above mentioned people participated in peer debriefing with my analysis.

To peer debrief, the participants received a transcript of data and discussions as to the accuracy of assertions and episodes were discussed. Each person's interpretations were considered as the data continued to be collected. Informal discussions and interviews with the students and collection of artifacts acted as additional data. As Phase 3 progressed, sampling became more theoretical as hypotheses were developed and refined.

At the end of Phase 3, I reviewed all collected data (field notes, audiotapes, artifacts, and interviews) and created a theoretical summary of working hypotheses. This included those hypotheses and themes that were tentative as well as those that seemed firmly established. This summary was then used to guide methodological decisions, such as further data collection and sampling issues in attempts to establish each child's initial transition, as well as issues needing further investigation in the final phase. It was at this time that ten students became focal students, with two acting as participants only. Two students were dropped from focal student status because of two things: 1) they missed one or more focus group meetings and/or 2) they did not participate in journal writing and struggled to speak in discussion. The two students were still a part of the study and were never told of their diminished status. During this phase there were 12 focal students and three participants. Participants included those identified above or those who joined the group out of their own volition. Because the group met after school and was seen as a place to share, have fun, and eat, several students elected to attend without being asked. Being a former teacher and because one of the tenets of the study is that students should be allowed and encouraged to share their experiences, no one was turned down from attendance as long as they had a guardian permission and approval form.

Phase 4: Closure and Analysis

The final observational phase of this study included only periodic field observation. Classroom observation was halted completely, and teacher conversations through email and during lunchtime became regular. In addition to limited observations,

the aforementioned attitude survey was given to the students again. This survey was given prior to the onset of the new school year and then again in Mid November, in hopes of identifying any change in attitude as a result of experiences in the fifth grade.

During this time, member checks were made with the students weekly. Informal interviews were conducted with students throughout this phase during lunch and after school on average of one focus group per month and one lunch or after school informal talk per week. All informal conversations were held in attempts to identify significant events that occurred in my absence. These events were also captured through the students' writing.

Because of the constructivist/interpretivist nature of this research, the research hypotheses were not predetermined but emerged ongoing through the data during analysis. As such, questions and activities during focus groups and informal meetings were not static but emerged from the analysis. Thus, data analysis procedures depended on the data collected and were not predefined.

Data Sources: Collection, Documentation, and Record-keeping

Although data collection methods have been mentioned briefly in the preceding section, I would like to elaborate on each of the methods used to gather data.

Observation (and Participation) by the Researcher

My role in the school was that of participant and observer. By employing this role, I both observed and participated in the activities occurring during and after school.

Classroom Observation

I spent a total of 5 hours in each of the three fifth grade classrooms. Other than the occasional student interaction, most observations (and all observations in Ms. Beaches and Bloom's classroom) were essentially as an observer. The goal of these observations was to observe and record the experience of the new classroom. This included, but was not limited to, the actions of the teacher, the students, perceptions of either, structuring of

the environment, and/or through activities provided by the environment. Initial observations were used to identify patterns in the classroom and individual interactions, as they related to particular focal students. Patterns that I observed in these interactions aided in the discovery and refinement of hypotheses about transitions for children and the struggles and successes they engage in as they move across schooling years. The observational field notes acted as a foundation from which the students' perceptions and experiences could be triangulated. Over the data analysis however, it became clear that the observational data did not have as much to say about the internal negotiations and experiences the children were undergoing and as such rarely were used in this analysis.

Expanded Field Notes

Expanding field notes allowed me to take an extended look at the gathered data and to provide additional detail and enhancement of notes taken during actual time spent in the classroom. Because the classroom environment is a place of intense movement and dynamic timing, it becomes important to get notes written quickly, often requiring shorthanded scripts of events which later need detail and depth to capture the meaning and details of the interaction and situation. As such, when I left the classroom I immediately went to a computer in the library and reread my written notes to elaborate and expand on the situations and contexts and note any methodological, theoretical, or personal thoughts based on the observations I had. Like previously stated, I periodically shared these notes with the teachers and other member-checkers (identified above) for purposes of triangulation and member checking.

Focus Group Meetings

Focus group meetings were held four times over the course of the study. The duration of each group became longer at the request of the participants. Per se, the first meeting last one hour, the second an hour and a half, the third two hours and the fourth two and a half. The students requested (as did the principal) additional focus group meetings that will be held next semester for non-research reasons.

The structure of the focus groups was essentially the same regardless of how long the meetings lasted. Individual interviews were held as the others engaged with two tasks, writing to prompts given to them (see Appendix G for example) and a visual representation project with topics given (see Appendix H for example). After each focal student was interviewed (other students in attendance were occasionally interviewed as well), I would return to the large table and begin a discussion. These discussions were sometimes guided by questions, although mostly the students were talking as I approached the table and I merely joined the conversation. From time to time I would ask a question or pose a problem or counter claim. I would also bring discussion back to issues and initial thoughts and not let tangents linger. I tried to speak only to rephrase or clarify a topic or remark made, to handle turn-taking behavior, or to redirect the conversation. At the end of the time, we closed down the library including cleaning our trash and turning off the lights. From there, I waited outside until each child was picked up or took them home myself as per written request of the parent.

Interviews with Ms. Beaches, Ms. Bloom, and Ms. Markowitz

The teachers were to be interviewed twice, once before the start of school, and once in October. Only one teacher participated in the interview in October. The other two teachers declined any additional participation. The three pre-school interviews took place in the teacher's respective classroom, as did the one post interview. Interviews took place before or after school hours. General topics addressed in these unstructured interviews were factors influencing their beliefs about each student, ways they handle their classroom, transition processes, and participation in writing as a classroom practice. For the teachers who did not participate in the post-interview, namely Ms. Beaches and Ms. Bloom, both made written email comments to me that acted in place of the meetings.

In addition to these more scheduled interviews, there were many opportunities for informal interviews throughout the four-month period. These occurred throughout all phases of data collection and took place at random times they were free, in the halls or at

lunch, or even after school. Field notes were made of these interactions as well and added to any field notes taken during the day.

Interviews with Students

I formally interviewed the students once before school began and one at a time during the first hour of each of the focus group meetings. These more formal interviews were structured by questions (see Appendices I). The questions were made as the data analysis showed patterns and themes emerging and were guided by my working hypotheses as well as other classroom experiences. For example, during the first focus group several students mentioned their teachers being "hard to understand" or, "just not getting me." Because these statements dealt with the transitions as related to new context and new teacher, questions such as, "So, what do you think you teacher thinks of you?" were asked. Interviews attempted to illuminate key experiences and instances as seen by the students as inhibiting or promoting their transition. In addition to these interviews, many informal interviews occurred throughout the study at times not scheduled. However, questions proceeded around the notion of transitions, and included their views of the classroom, of particular occurrences, impressions of writing and of their experiences therein.

Audio Tape Recordings

Audio tape recordings were used to record specific interactions. Specifically, the interviews and focus group meeting times were audio taped and later transcribed. During times I am interviewing and the rest of the group is working on other items, a second audiotape was placed in the group as they engage with their tasks. All transcriptions were read and reread to discover themes and patterns for later questioning in upcoming focus group meetings.

Artifact Collection

Artifacts were collected during this study and included but not limited to written journals kept by the students for me, writing logs kept in their classrooms for their classroom teachers, letters written to me during those four months, art given to me by the students and art produced during focus group meetings. I collected and Xeroxed all artifacts related to my study. While the range of data collection activities has been described, sampling of specific topics emerged as data analysis occurred.

Sampling

A theoretical sampling technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to select the participants. The goal of this procedure was not to ensure a random sample or one generalizable across populations, but instead to emphasize participants who could contribute data relevant to transitions and for whom transitions could potentially have effects upon while allowing for different experiences from different initial contexts to be illuminated. Toward this end, students were chosen who would be able to contribute a range of possibilities and perspectives with regard to transitions.

The sample attempted to represent different experiences that transpired for different children, depending on previous issues and personal trends. Themes for students were coded until saturation was reached (Strass & Corbin, 1990) or until further data collection merely acknowledges the previous themes. Thus, sampling is theoretical and purposeful.

Data Analysis

In order to understand the perceptions and experiences of the students at Radliff Elementary, I analyzed a variety of data I collected with a qualitative analysis framework, namely Grounded Theory. As opposed to quantitative research with which the validity and reliability can be established by adherence to proper statistical procedures, qualitative research requires detail and depth such that the readers' trust is gained and the conclusions valid and reasonable. Because of this, the constant comparative method was

used in analysis to theoretically ground hypotheses in data. For specifically coded examples, see Appendix J.

Grounded Theory and The Constant Comparative Method

Grounded theory grew from a need identified by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to have a process for generating theory and not just verifying it. To help encourage a renaissance of theory-building, these theorists contributed a procedure for inductively creating theory from data. The methodology for this theory is called grounded theory and utilizes a set of strategies for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Therefore, rather than validating a previously created theory, grounded theory attempts to discover theory from data. Through careful observation and systematic documentation, a phenomenon is conceptualized into categories and then related to and organized within to form a theoretical representation of the observed phenomenon. Unlike other methodological and theoretical approaches to theory-building which are often linear and procedural in nature, both the activities and the theory creation occur simultaneously during grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe grounded theory as, "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed throughout the research process" (12). As a result, data analysis begins soon after the first bit of data is collected and may continue until far after the last piece. By allowing preliminary hypotheses to be brought back into data collection, they can be refined and deepened through further data collection, thereby bringing analytic rigor to a qualitative methodological approach.

In grounded theory, coding plays a pivotal role in the process of describing, categorizing, and identifying themes. Strauss and Corbin (1967) describe the types of coding to be used in this study, namely, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Though data analysis begins with open coding and ultimately ends with selective coding, grounded theory analysis does not require that one type of coding be complete before movement to the next type. Instead, the researcher moves fluidly between the different coding strategies, even allowing co-coding to occur. The types of coding arise from a method of theory production known as the Constant Comparative Method. The Constant

Comparative Method involves reading and rereading data in attempts to categorize to items that seem to relate to a central theme, idea, or content area. Identification, delimitation, and justification of categorical inclusions or exclusions are based on rules and definitions that are developed directly from the data. As hypotheses are formed, negative cases, those that do not seem to fit within the categories, are sought out and analyzed to revise and potentially re-identify or redefine categories. The following paragraphs will define and explain the three types of coding that will be used in this study.

Open coding, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) is, "The analytical approach through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data" (101). It includes close detail of data for meaningful ideas or units. These are labeled, or coded, to capture the relevant information or identifying effect. The resulting units of analysis are ideas that represent different episodes that can be grouped into categories based on similarities. Open coding can occur line-by-line, paragraph-by-paragraph, and/or episode-by-episode. These categories serve as the building blocks of the emerging grounded theory. During open coding, I coded anything that seemed to stand out as a student transitioning, including, but not limited to, new classroom processes, thoughts about last year, difficulties this year, emotions felt about school now or previously, how they describe themselves or their teacher, factors they name as critical to their struggle or success, and so on.

Axial coding is, "the process of relating categories to their subcategories" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, 123). It is termed axial because it links categories at the level of properties or dimensions, around a central theme, or axis. In this process, related categories that may have previously been disjoined during open coding are rejoined. Relationships are established between categories, and subcategories emerge to build a stronger infrastructure for the impending propositions. From this categories are revised and constantly compared between participants and episodes. During axial coding, I grouped the conceptual codes under broader categories to form more precise and complete explanations about the phenomena I was seeing emerge. From this I developed

a code note for each student and recorded my observation of the emerging patterns and concepts. This occurred four times, as each focus group meeting came to pass and several other times as new data was constructed over time.

As axial coding developed the study's main categories, selective coding was used to organize and integrate the categories into a grounded theory. During this process, the central phenomena were related to a central category and then further abstracted to form more narrative samples that characterize when, how, and under what conditions relationships between categories occurred. The findings were then validated against the data, and thus, constantly compared to access accuracy and fit. I conducted selective coding such that categories could be refined and integrated. I then combined and compared the results of students' responses to the questionnaire, categories from the interview transcripts and focus meeting transcripts, and also my observation journals. The process led me to themes for students' transition experience in elementary school as well as case studies of those experiences.

Assuring Trustworthiness of the Study

A critical issue for qualitative studies is to establish trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn from the data. Some of the ways that Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that a study's trustworthiness can be evaluated are in terms of its transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and credibility .

Transferability refers to the extent for which the results are applicable to individuals beyond those who were sampled. As described before, participants were chosen through a process of theoretical sampling to represent a range of experiences. As discussed, the sample differs in schooling background as well as issues related to schooling. As a result, this study, although case study in nature, and thus more individual than large-scale studies, still has potential for transferability to other students based on similar attributes and practices. A range of perspectives and experiences were sampled further allowing for this. Limitations presented in the sample chosen, and thus important

to the applicability of the study's findings will be explored in further in the limitations section.

Dependability is concerned with the replicability of a study to the end of similar findings. Dependability is established by providing the reader with evidence of the findings such that if it were to be repeated, it would end in similar results. One way to enhance dependability is through creation of an audit trail. This record of the process of data collection and analysis included raw data (interview transcripts, observation transcripts, field notes, and documents), data reduction and analysis products (such as coding pages and hypothesis generation notes), synthesis pages (analysis sheets, concept maps) and process notes (journals). A written history that tracked changes that occurred both in the setting as well as other important features, furthered the dependability of the study and were kept in detailed field note format.

Confirmability in a qualitative study involves seeking feedback from others about the hypotheses generated from the data. It is established by showing that the data, rather than the researcher, are confirmable representations of the participants. This study safeguarded confirmability through an audit trail, triangulation of results, and peer debriefing. In addition, case reporting provides excerpts of "raw data" to illustrate assertions. These safeguards increase the confirmability of this study by providing the reader with access to actual data such that they may draw their own conclusions or further align their thoughts with those of the researcher about the accuracy of the representation.

Credibility is described by Guba and Lincoln (1989)identify credibility as the criterion from which one asks if the correspondence between the way the participants perceive social constructs and the ways the researcher portrays hers. Seven ways to guard for credibility in research are identified in Mertens (1998) and include: Prolonged Engagement, Persistent Observation, Peer Debriefing, Negative Case Analysis, Progressive Subjectivity, Member Checking, and Triangulation. For this study, I knew and worked with the students for over 15 months, observed in their classrooms for 5 hours, held focus groups for over 14 hours during which time students were sought to

answer questions and themes arising from the discourse, each meeting was transcribed, coded, field noted, and a meeting with graduate school colleague as well as a professor was held for discussion each week, meetings with the principal were held throughout the study to discuss personal experience so that I could keep a more "open mind and not be so biased by previous experience" (Mertens, 1998, p.182). A negative case, to be discussed in the case study section, was found and shared to show not only the pattern emerging and creating the theoretical model, but also to showcase that not all cases are seemingly easy to fit into a model. In addition, information was triangulated through the use of journals, interviews (in and out of school), parent interviews, artistic expressions, focus group meetings, and other correspondence with the students. The data from all of these sources is combined to support the findings.

Persistent Observation and Prolonged Engagement

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest, prolonged engagement and persistent observation were both a part of this study. Prolonged engagement is defined by Lincoln and Guba as, "the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes; learning the 'culture,' testing for misinformation introduced by distortions … and building trust" (p. 301). As a former teacher at Radliff Elementary in the previous grade level of the participants, I was able to have trust at the onset of the study such that all participants, including the students, parents, teachers, librarians, and principals, knew and felt safe with me. This also helped to eliminate some of the possible distortions that can arise from not knowing the landscape, the lives, or values of the context and participants. I acted as both a participant and observer for over four months to record and examine closely the experiences of the students. This observation and participation markedly helped me to more accurately understand, interpret, and reassess students' responses and experiences.

Triangulation

Triangulation additionally assures the credibility of my results. I employed several data sources during data collection that included different methods (questionnaire, interviews, observations), different people (students, parents, teachers) and different

investigators (member checkers and myself). Student's responses to the questionnaires as well as remarks made in the transcriptions were revisited for clarification or further illumination. The interviews with the parents were compared to that of the students for even further elucidation on the students' perceptions and experiences. Triangulation of data sources provided me with data encompassing a wide breadth of perspectives, times, and experience, and the contextual validation that Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed.

Peer Debriefing

Throughout all stages of the study, I regularly discussed my tentative observations and conclusions with my dissertation chairs (one in Language and Literacy Studies and one in Educational Psychology), a teacher from Radliff Elementary (Ms. Bobbie), and two of my doctoral colleagues also in Language and Literacy. I discussed with them the design of my study, problems I encountered during data collection and analysis, and my understanding of the data. "Exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session … and exploring aspects of inquiry that might otherwise remain on implicit within the inquirers mind" (p. 308). The discussions with them acted as a sounding board and explicit idea forming time. The checks and balance system helped keep me grounded within the data, test working hypotheses, as well as clear emotions, connections, and feelings that may have been clouding my analysis and judgment.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter is composed of three sections reporting on the general results of data analysis. Section 1 provides an overall description of the classroom contexts. Section 2 gives an illumination of the themes I derived in analyzing the data about how children in transition negotiated a new classroom context. Data sources for these themes included the interviews with the students, teachers, art produced both in journals and in focus group meetings, as well as my observation journal. In Section 3, I report the descriptive statistics from the students' responses to the questionnaire in terms of how they viewed school, what they felt about their past and present teachers and how their feelings affected their emotions in and about school, and what students saw as important subjects to be studied in school compared to the teacher's perceived beliefs. This part of the results is meant to provide detailed information to support and provide foundation for the bigger picture of the students' experiences, both social and emotional, past and present, in school contexts during times of transition.

Preliminary Issues about the Reporting of this Data

Before I present the results of the study, there are three issues I would like to discuss. The interviews in this study were conducted in two languages, both English and Spanish. Although the initial goal was to choose children who spoke English in school and therefore had exited or never had been part of a bilingual classroom, three of the parents were Spanish speakers only. During interviews, parents spoke in whichever language they were most comfortable and a translator, a teacher colleague of mine, helped to facilitate the interviews. As such, parent interviews were transcribed in English and checked by a native Spanish speaker for accuracy in interpretation. All students spoke English during the interviews, although some code-switched occasionally during individual interviews. For the purposes of this study, all quotes will be displayed as they

were said. If the quote contains Spanish words or phrases, the Spanish will be presented with the English in brackets.

Another caveat I would like to forefront relates to the focal students as children. Because this study attempts to illuminate the roles, negotiations, and thoughts of young people, it is of the utmost importance that their words are presented in their language and in their terms. Although sometimes child language is translated much like a foreign language might be, because this is a qualitative study in which the language and experience of the participants serves as the underpinning of the experience, words and thoughts will be presented as they were said, with errors in grammar, foci, and meandering thesis. My choice not to clean up the language is meant to provide evidence for the thoughtful expression, meaningful negotiation, and perceived thoughts of these children. A foundational belief arising out of this study is that children know much more than for which they are given credit, their words, as written and said are the lenses through which I want to portray their knowledge and experience. It is thus, the children perceptions. Just as emotions are central to our lives, it is also a large part of the children's lives. As such, their negative or positive emotional discourse should be seen as their interaction with the world and experiences as well as a perception, their perception.

Just as language can reveal meaning making in children, art is another tool by which children can express their understandings of the worlds they live in. Scholars as notable as John Dewey (1936) and Elliot Eisner (1997) have long asserted that art is a tool with which children can actively portray their life experiences in different and unique ways that language alone cannot reveal. The importance of art as a legitimate means with which educators can measure intelligence and ways of problem solving is supported by scholars like Gardner (1983) and his multiple intelligences theory. Moreover, Edwards and Willis (2000) state simply that just as our modern, adult worlds are enriched by information in multimedia formats, children are naturally drawn towards combining symbolic forms (writing, drawing, speaking) to share ideas with others. The Reggio Emilio approach to early childhood education has expounded on these ideas by designing a curriculum around what they call the "100 languages of children", where

artistic "literacy" is seen as equally as important as literacy in a child's natural language. Indeed, researchers like Cox (2005) have taken these ideas a step further and studied children in the process of drawing, seeking to define the child's drawing as an intentional, constructive act of "thinking in action" in which children bring "shape and order to their experience"(p. 114) and "define their reality" (p.124).

Section One
Overall Descriptions of the Classroom Contexts:
"They just aren't always good."

This section provides an overview of what the classroom contexts, namely Ms. Beaches, Ms. Bloom, and Ms. Markowitz's, as well as last year's teachers, Ms. Bobbie, Ms. Gypsy, and Ms. Wilson's classrooms, were like in this study. I start with a brief description of each fifth grade teacher who participated in the study and then provide shorter descriptions of the past fourth grade teachers. The fourth grade teachers' classroom spaces were not initially a focus of this study and thus, are provided now only to frame comments made by students when they were comparing and describing their current classroom spaces. Because the environment of each classroom, both past and present, seemed to have a certain impact on student perceptions according to the student interviews, the second part of this section describes the environment, through the eyes of the student participants, the teachers, and myself.

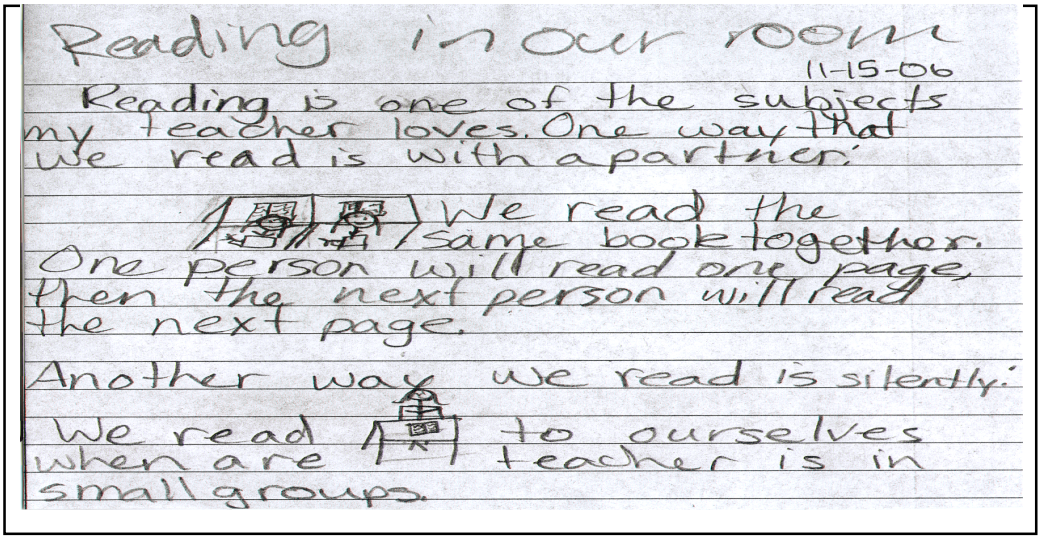
Because this study is about the perceptions and understandings of the students, and not particularly the teachers, even this section will present quotes from the children as ways to illuminate the fifth grade teachers. So, although these chapters will contain my verbiage, some of my translation, and my experiences, it should be stated that the quotes included from the children attempt to portray their classrooms through their eyes.

Fifth Grade Teachers: "We just move on…"

Ms. Beaches. I met Ms. Beaches during the first of August as she worked in her classroom readying for the start of the new school year. Her classroom was small, having been placed in a pre-kindergarten room space for 2006-2007, but contained a window for which she had sewn colorful yellow curtains to fit. A student, Bette, would describe it later saying, "It's a lot smaller. We really don't have centers maybe cause it's so small," and another student Tzeitel, discussed this year's classroom as, "Smaller, It is so small. Cause we got a PreK classroom. It's itty bitty." Everything was labeled with a labeling machine as belonging to the teacher, including but not limited to: pencil cups, the pencil sharpener space, and each pair of scissors. She had already covered each student's textbooks in colored paper, red for science (labeled science) and blue for math (labeled math), etc. The neatly wrapped books were stacked in the middle of each desk by the first of August and nameplates were shiny from the contact paper attached to each desk in the upper left-hand corner. Ms. Beaches told me that because she was short, "Each desk was lowered to the shortest possible height and all students will use small chairs," so that she was able to work easily with them. The desks were placed in groups of six based on student levels (as indicated by TAKS scores, the state high stakes exam) with at least one high achieving student in each. Later as the year began, Sophie shared in her journal, "There are only two open tables [desks where no one sits] in the class, that messes up are [our] turn[ing] in a worksheet or get[ting] some books," showing how compact the room was, so much so that even turning in papers was difficult. The room was notably small and as Bette further stated, "We have been getting new students we already have 25 kids and we're expecting 3 more!" As the classroom received more bodies, the space dwindled further. Yet Clementine, the most light-hearted noted one redeeming feature about this space, "I like the class because it doesn't have any carpet and in the winter when it gets cold we don't get shocked as much from electricity."

Ms. Beaches taught all subjects. Her schedule consisted of math, reading, science, social studies, and language arts. Hours were allotted for each and the schedule was posted in plain sight before the children entered. She began each day with a handwritten

story problem that the children copied in a spiral notebook and answered independently. After, they read silently. Structure was clearly a marked expectation in the classroom. Ms. Beaches referred in her interview to the structure as "important for struggling kids who might not get enough of it at home." In addition to her feelings about the meanings of structure, the students who would fill the small room also felt the structure, not only in timing but in curriculum too. As Clementine said, "Reading books is strongly enforced in our class. We have a reading grade sheet and you have to mark it all down carefully or you get in trouble." C.C. portrayed her views of the perceived structure in Ms. Beaches' classroom through a picture in her journal. It portrays C.C.'s view of reading in Ms. Beaches' classroom.



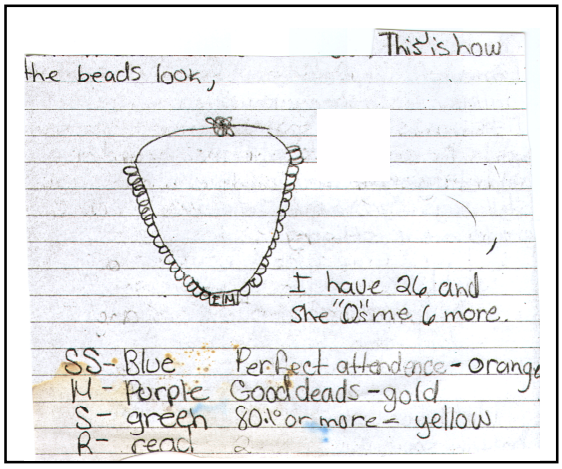
"So, that's reading in our class. Everything else is straight. We mostly start with a math or vocabulary, math and then things. Then science is the last thing we do cause we don't go outside, like ever. So umm…we stay all the science time. So it is mostly like that, straight. Really straight."

Ms. Beaches used a technique called stacking in her class, in which she teaches her lessons in math, reading, and science, giving and explaining assignments, then, moving on. She then allowed the students work time until lunch to do the assignments she had given for the first three subjects. For some students this technique made the teaching seem fast and the directions confusing. Bruce told me his feelings about the

speed of the new fifth grade classroom, "We have been going kind of fast," wrote Bruce, "We just move on." For Bruce, the regimentation and what he felt was a lack of facilitation from the teacher made the teaching seem speedy and impersonal. However, speed was important to Ms. Beaches. She stated, "There is a lot to do and not time to fiddle-faddle around." She was at her desk should anyone need help, I noted in my observation notes in September. Aaron, another student known in fourth grade for candid comments, phrased that though she was available, "If you have questions and she said them before, she will tell you to sit down and not in a nice way."

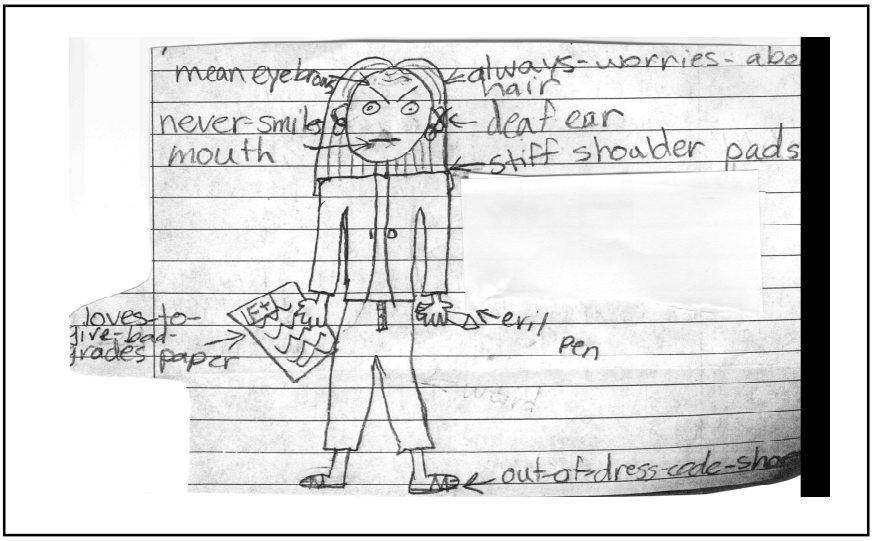
After lunch, Ms. Beaches would teach again for about an hour, and time was again given to work. Work was done individually, and the classroom was, "A quiet place so everyone can think and reflect," as Clementine designated in her pre-school interview. Clementine further stated regarding the Ms. Beaches' classroom environment, "She makes it all quiet." Anything not completed became homework. The children recognized this pattern of teacher teaches, work, teacher teaches, work and immediately echoed discontent with it. As C.C. stated in her journal (as resonated for several others), "I'm not sure I am getting smarter because the only thing we do is read, worksheet, read, worksheet. Then for homework, we do a worksheet on science. She doesn't provide a good learning environment." She was perceived as a teacher whose classroom was a cold venue in school.

Ms. Beaches' discipline procedure consisted of beads. Children earned beads kept in a shoelace around their neck for different positive tasks they completed. Bette explained below in a journal entry how the beads work.



The beads acted as visible signs of success and achievement.

Bulletin boards did not change in the time I was there. As I wrote in my observation journal, "Wow. I've been coming in here for months and the bulletin boards inside the room are the exact same as they were on the first day: rules, rules, and rules. Interesting, since the outer hall bulletin board is required (and is) changed each month." Often, items were made specifically for this outer bulletin board as shown in my observation notes, "Do your best on this and make sure you have me edit because it is going outside in the hallway." As will be shown later, this classroom was one in which the children struggled in their transition as evidenced in interviews, focus group meetings, and journal writing. A drawing produced by Bette of her teacher follows.



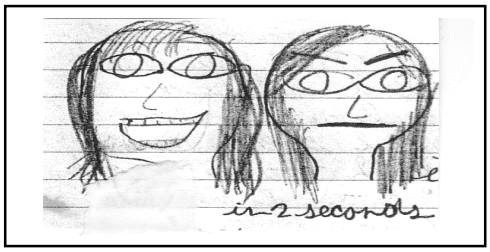
This drawing shows one way the teacher was seen as someone allowed to bend the rules for herself, not in tune with the students she taught, and seemingly, at the time of this drawing, perceived as someone with whom the students were struggling to connect with.

Ms. Bloom. Ms. Bloom taught in a classroom connected by a bathroom hall to Ms. Beaches. They had taught as team teachers for the previous five years. Their schedule and techniques were similar, including the notion of stacking. However Ms. Bloom's classroom had one explicit rule, said to me several times in the preschool interview, that her classroom is a place where she feels, "Children should learn discipline and respect," that they, "need a place to feel secure and like someone cares." Although discipline was enforced clearly, students often did not see her actions as coming from a place of care or concern for them or their wellbeing. For example, Bette said many times over the course of our meetings, "She is very harsh and cruel, which mean the same things. And she gets in your face which makes you feel little and dumb." Tzeitel claimed, "You don't talk in the class ever cause she wants it silent, no learning together anymore. She feels for me like she makes it all desert because she doesn't make it comfortable. Like we are all sweating. She comes out and then, 'WHAM!' [Made a bad face with wide eyes] And it is always like we need water to survive, but we have to ask and she only drinks." This sentiment would be echoed later by several different students whom all felt Ms. Bloom only cared that the room was quiet and that she was respected. During my observation, I must admit, I would echo the same idea, "The classroom is so quiet each time I am in here! I look through the window in the door to see if anyone is inside!" Interview and journal data were fraught with this sentiment that will discussed in detail later.

Ms. Bloom had many rules and enforced them efficiently and consistently. All four focal students in her class as well as four from other classes specifically mentioned her as, "strict," and as, "the meanest fifth grade teacher." I noted in my field notes that there was seemingly no talking in her class, an observation recapitulated by several students. They said such things as, "We don't get to talk that much. In fact, ever," and "

The biggest difference is you don't talk in class ever." Students saw Ms. Bloom's class as silent and strict, a harsh environment for anything making noise, including themselves.

Her desks were in a large U shape with her overhead centered at the chalkboard. Unlike Ms. Beaches' classroom, she believed in having students reading aloud from the textbook as an instructional tool. She claimed, "I like to have the kids read out loud because it enables them to hear it and then understand it better." Each time I was in her room, reading aloud from the textbook was done as others followed along. The same three students, one of them Bette, read orally for about a paragraph and then Ms. Bloom would tell another to pick up. Although it was not only those three students who read aloud, they were always chosen, as Rose told me, "because we sound the best." Rose furthered, "All we do is read for those textbooks and do worksheets." An additional comment made by all of her students was how quickly the curriculum seemed to move. "She's a really quick person," replied Bette, "and she thinks that people should be quick too since we are already in fifth grade. Like we have all the skills, that we should just, 'Bam!' [Snaps her fingers] have it!" Or as Rose said, "It is just too fast for most of us. Like, you don't have any time to process what is going on or how you think about things in your life. You just do it as fast as you can without thinking because so you can get it done and not get yelled at." "She is always hurrying people up because she has her answer key and knows all the answers so she thinks there very easy and quick to figure out when they're hard and difficult," Bette wrote in her journal. Or, like Sophie admitted, "She intimidates you so if there is a chance you are wrong or she already said it, you don't want to take it." "Worst of all," wrote Sophie in her journal, "She doesn't take responsibility for anything! Like the kids are always to blame and she has no fault in it. It's bogus because everyone in it has some fault if there is something bad happening!" Children admonished Ms. Bloom often for the ways she portrayed herself to the students. They had graphic thoughts and unending perils they desired to become of her. I noted after a focus group meeting, "Boy, the pictures are just plain mean!" In the drawing below, Bette shared how she felt that Ms. Bloom changed from smiling to mad in two seconds.



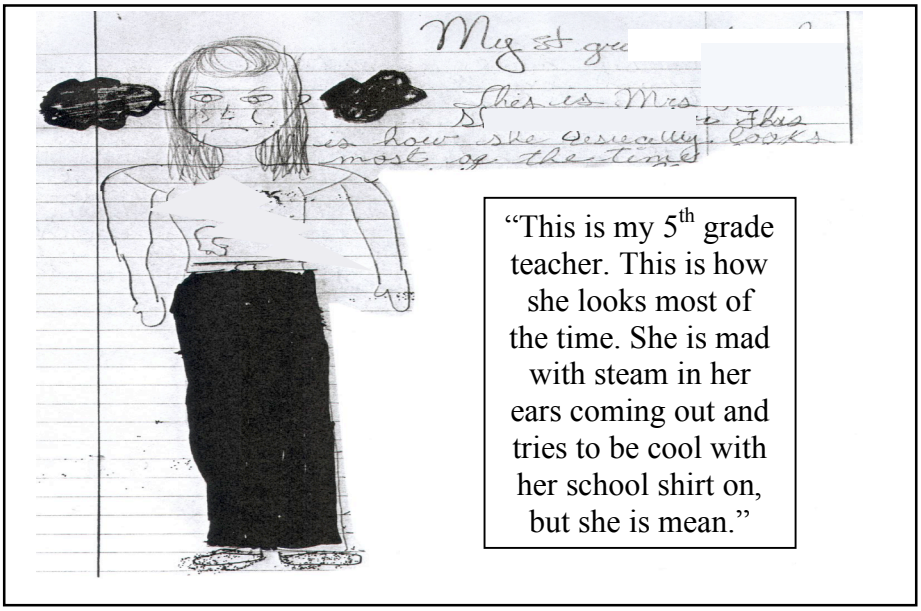
Tzeitel explained it in her own words, “She always yells and makes people feel like fungus. [Other people] look at you sad like a puppy. They do feel sorry for us. I feel sorry for us,” and Aaron plus five others shared that “She doesn’t like kids. Sophie furthered, “She only talks to the whole class. She is mean. She could act like she’s your best friend and then…Ahh!” All of the children, not just those present in Ms. Bloom’s class, expressed sentiments about the classroom as hurtful, quick, and in some senses scary. They noted Ms. Bloom’s seemingly quick temper and changeable attitude with comments such as, “You never know if it is good or bad and then one second it is the best and then not.” The students all agreed vehemently with Rose as she described her classroom with Ms. Bloom during a focus group, “Yeah, we are human but we aren’t supposed to be in Ms. Bloom’s class. We have to be robots, unhuman beings,” and with Sophie who added, “She is a very closed person.”

Contrary to what Ms. Bloom intended (as she spoke in the summer about her goals for the year were to have a happy, safe classroom space), the students saw the room as a frightening place, where although it has plenty of quiet, not a lot of time for reflection, where they are not a community of ideas, but merely of space. A sample of the words used at various times during the focus group meetings to describe her classroom were, “hard, Hell, bad, Evil, Power-Hungry, horrible, frightening, and strict.”

Ms. Bloom’s bulletin boards were pre-made and remained in line with the social studies and science topics contained in the Instructional Planning Guides [stated objectives and teaching points for each day and time given by the district], changing with each nine-week period. Unlike the bulletin board that changed with the curriculum, an issue for the students was the lack of recess that seemed to remain constant. Rose told me

in an interview, “There is no time for recess in Ms. [Bloom’s] classroom,” said Rose. “We have it maybe one time a week because it is a privilege that we never get our work done fast enough [to have].” In addition, “Everyone has to be done with their work if we go. Otherwise, we all have to wait and read inside. Just for one or two people” stated Tzeitel who felt bad because it was her fault sometimes. This classroom was the one the children struggled most to transition into as evidenced in interviews, focus group meetings, and journal writing. The children felt unsure about their roles, other than to be quiet, and found the place somewhat vacant of life and care.

Ms. Bloom had several renditions of her drawn in focus group meetings and in journals. Below is one typical drawing done by Sophie. As a caveat to this drawing, I must say that this is the tamest of any depiction of Ms. Bloom done by any of the children.



Still, as will be discussed later, they wanted to like her. As Tzeitel alleged in one of our meetings, “She really doesn’t know how mean and bad she is.”

Ms. Markowitz. Ms. Markowitz planned and executed her plans individually, although she met for regular planning meetings with the other 5th grade teachers once a week. She said she felt, “Alone in her grade at this school,” and that, “No one really wants to work

as a team" with her. She confided that it was the same way at her last school. What Ms. Markowitz didn't know was that much like her feeling separated from the other teachers, the children too felt separated, but in a good way. Their class was, as Martin wrote, "The best one of the 5th grade ones."

Ms. Markowitz's room was also small and the children often complained about their closeness to one another. Dixie wrote in her journal about this size issue, "What I do not like about my classroom is that we have a messy room and we also have a small room and we're 5th graders in a small room." I would concur in my observation notes, "Every single one of the fifth grade classes I have visited is so small. Especially for the kids that are the biggest ones at the school!" Space was at a luxury in these fifth grade classrooms.

Immediately upon meeting Ms. Markowitz, I noticed she smiled every time she talked about teaching or her experiences as a teacher. She explained to me that teaching was a career she had come into after a degree in Social Studies and a late thought of what to do with such a degree. She had obtained her emergency certification a year later.

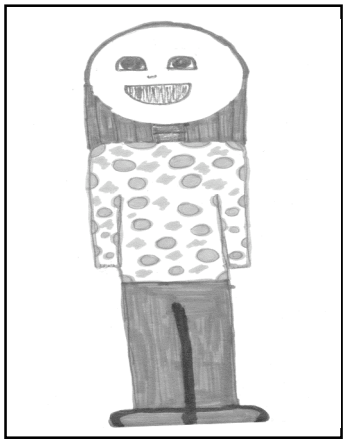
Her classroom was set up in groups of four, and the students chose their seats upon entering on the first day. This seating arrangement changed as she came to know her students. The room was sparsely decorated at the time of the August interview. However, over the course of the study, all of the bulletin boards were decorated by student work. By the first month, students were taught to choose their best work for display. She told me, "The bulletin boards are not my spaces, but theirs. I don't care what they look like; they should care." Each child had a space on a bulletin board with their name marked, for which they were to keep new work up as they saw fit. The kids took this job very seriously. "I pick a new piece when we get our Thursday folder, that way it is all together from the week and I can pick the bestest one," said Stella. All subjects were taught according to the same schedule as Ms. Beaches and Ms. Bloom, however Ms. Markowitz did not engage in "stacking." However, Ms Markowitz rarely got to every subject everyday. Daniel spoke about how centers were done in this classroom during a focus meeting but that they were different than in his fourth grade classroom "We only

do centers in science but we do them at our desks and no talking. Sometimes we do math war. I guess we kind of have centers but not really, he told me. In my field notes I echoed a similar contextual posit, "Ms. Markowitz's room does use centers, sometimes. They are mostly done at their desks. In fact, I haven't seen them done any other way, but they are done in here in contrast to the other classes! But, as Stella told us, "We do have a lot to do in reading though. We have to read things like Shiloh and other stories in groups." And Mona, another participant said, "Usually we just read and do an assignment." The schedule was seemingly amenable as needs arose in the classroom. However, as Daniel repeated several times and in various venues, "She will never give us enough time to do our work. Every time it is always 2 mins this or 10 mins that, it is just too short," or, "She makes it crazy. She gives us hurries. Like she says, 'Five minutes this, and five minutes that.' Hurry all the time. Every time five minutes. She doesn't give us that time to actually get stuff done." Martin described her desk as, "a messy place where you can't find your homework but you can get help." It would be shown that children did come to Ms. Markowitz at her desk for help. In my observation notes I penned, "The kids come to her all the time-or she is walking around checking. They are comfortable asking for help and she is comfortable giving it." This classroom was a stark contrast to the other two rooms. Rarely however, was homework given. "If she does [give homework] the most she gave was like 20 problems. All the homework has been in math but it's not much," Martin told the focus group which was met with a lot of jealous stares and head nodding.

The discipline protocol was something with which this teacher struggled. I wrote on several occasions throughout the first month about her battles with behavior. Quotes such as, "as I enter she is attempting to calm them down," and "It is so loud I can barely hear the teacher as I walk in!" were common until about October when rules became more consistent, and students became aware of how their behavior was affecting the classroom climate. Noting the change in her class, I spoke to Ms. Markowitz. She told me as we walked to lunch through the hall, "I've been working on them for weeks now. The unruly ones, especially the boys, just overpowered me. I had to take some power back. So, I did. It's worked for all of us." Stella, a student whose diligent journaling informed

much of this study wrote, “Mostly all the boys are bader than some girls and the boys are the worstest kids in the classroom,” and later she added, “[Ms. Markowitz] got mad at the boys and made them feel bad. It worked like it did last year! They are being better so far.” The children in Ms. Markowitz’s room were aware of the issues and trends in the class and were verbal and responsive to the needs of the teacher and of themselves. They had more power and felt more able to transition into the room as a community. As such, she was seen in more caring and loving ways than any of the other fifth grade teachers as is displayed in Mona’s rendition of Ms. Markowitz below.

“This is my teacher. She is happy to be with us sometimes and glad.”
-Frederica

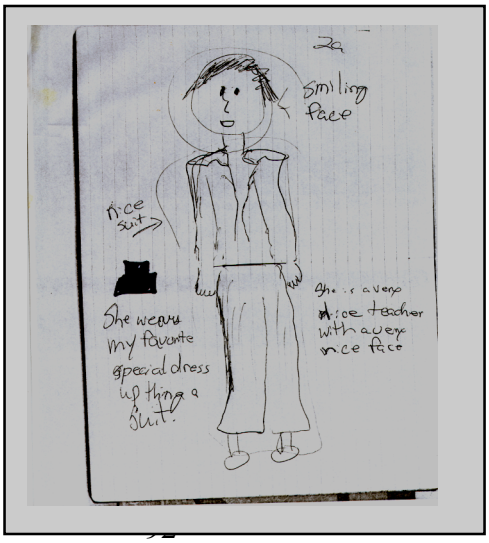


Here, as in each of the drawings done of her, Ms. Markowitz is seemingly smiling, a trait I noticed earlier and one which in later data will be described by the focal children as indicative of a teacher who likes children and her job. Their perceptions were only somewhat tempered by Ms. Markowitz’s smile.

Fourth Grade Teachers: “You know a teacher likes her job if she smiles.”

Ms. Bobbie. Ms. Bobbie was a fourth grade teacher during the 2005-2006 school year and was still teaching at Radliff Elementary in the fourth grade. Her classroom was a place for movement, and centers were used at least four times a week. The schedule was the same for all fourth grade teachers and consisted of math, reading, writing, social studies and science. Centers were engaged in after the math lesson and work time for about one hour per day. The centers had math, technology, guided reading, and another

task in line with the Instructional Planning Guides. A writing lesson was then given, although another teacher, an instructional specialist, often taught that lesson. After lunch and recess, science or social studies would occur. Ms. Bobbie felt that, "Discussion and understanding were more important than moving on, which the Instructional Planning Guides don't allow for." Desks were placed in groups of four but changed periodically. The focal students said about Ms. Bobbie, "My teacher was nice and loving, like we were really all equal, not just pretend equal…and she wanted us to be friends and to like her," said Sophie in a focus group meeting and again when she stated that Ms. Bobbie's class was, "The funnest and people got along." C.C. furthered, "I won't have teachers like in fourth grade again." Sophie reiterated, "The fourth grade teachers talk to you and want to get to know you and they do get to know you, especially Ms. Bobbie and Ms. Wilson. They thought about what you said…" Children spoke of Ms. Bobbie's class in loving and devoted ways, showcasing feelings of care and concern that were expressed towards the students by the teacher. Although a specific behavior plan was not in place in Ms. Bobbie's classroom, children felt themselves under control. As one student, Sophie, inscribed in her journal, "Ms. Bobbie never makes excuses like Ms. Bloom. Ms. Bobbie always lets me talk to her. She is open, but Ms. Bloom is closed. Ms. Bobbie is a great, fun teacher. I am good because she is nice." Because the children saw Ms. Bobbie as kind, she created in them a more autonomous behavior plan in which each was responsible for their own actions. Created by Sophie, this is a rendition of Ms. Bobbie.



It is apparent the regard to which she is held by her students. All of the artistic drawings of her were done similar to this one, with wide eyes and brimming smile.

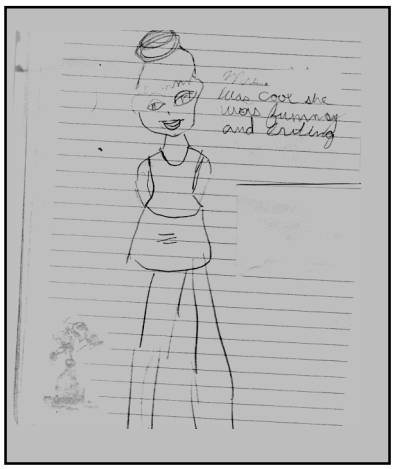
Ms. Gypsy. Ms. Gypsy had relocated to Austin last year and was participating in her third year of teaching after graduating. She was also my neighbor teacher last year. In order to pass to my room, a person would pass through hers, making our two classrooms "open-concept." Although our teaching and curricular decisions were vastly different, she was a respectful and supportive member of the fourth grade team. Her students respected her as Clementine exposed in her journal, "She was equal to us all, well most of us, except Winnie," and found her classroom fun, as Bette stated, "When I think about last year I think about learning a lot of stuff and having a lot of fun." Bette further asserted in her journal, "Ms. Gypsy was smart and very pretty. She made everyone smile and feel good. She always had very cool stories about her life. She makes me have very nice feelings inside about teachers." The children showed noticeably sweet feelings towards Ms. Gypsy, using words such as pretty, and nice to describe her and her classroom environment.

However, as Clementine wrote in her journal, she felt she needed more difficult work, saying that she understood why her fifth grade teacher, "has been a bit tougher on us" and that, "she can understand that…because Ms. Gypsy didn't show us a lot of ways." In fact, the administration did end up having some trouble agreeing with Ms. Gypsy's classroom decisions, and she left the following year. Still, she had been very accepting of my classroom and my ways of teaching, even as my room was disorderly and often loud, which can cause strife between teachers, especially if the classrooms are open, like ours were.

Ms. Gypsy's lessons followed the Instructional Planning Guide and the textbooks. She liked a quiet classroom and believed that students needed to know two things, which she often repeated, "You need discipline to be successful and Ms. Wilson is crazy." Both were said with a smile. Her rapport with her students was good and her demeanor friendly, even when pressures from home and school seemed overwhelming. Her students

saw her as someone who, “let us ask questions” and “never cut us off while speaking,” as Stella wrote. She kept her desks in rows most times and occasionally she would move the students into groups. She was known by my students as a “teaser” because she would put them in groups and then before the day was over, they would be back in lines or privileges would be invoked and then revoked. She did not engage her children in centers, but about once a week would allow several to go to the computer for searches and research. Although different than Ms. Bobbie’s and my classrooms, her classroom was seen by the children as safe and predictable and as fifth graders, her former students increasingly talked about her room as “fun.” This fun and friendly teacher can be seen in the picture below drawn by Clementine.

Ms. Gypsy is cool and nice and awesome. I MISSSSS her.
-Bette



Ms. Wilson. I struggle with beginning this section because it is about me, me as a teacher. I keep asking myself, “What sort of voice does one have when writing a dissertation and including actual data about herself? Should I sound like the nightly news, self-selecting, yet attempting factuality? Or perhaps admit to my inability to be unbiased and therefore grab a table seat on *The View* during hot topics?” What follows may sound aggrandizing, but I am saying what is true to me and it is grounded in the ways the students talked about my practice and classroom.

I taught at Radliff Elementary for one school year, 2005-2006 having been asked by the principal to come. My classroom was next to Ms. Gypsy and was full of energy and movement. It was, as Martin said, “Exciting, exciting, exciting which made me

excited, excited, excited." My room was certainly not quiet or ever still. It was, however, large, having stations set up all around the outside walls. Those included, six computers for a technology area, a large library of books with beanbags, a listening/writing center with tapes, headphones, and various other writing accoutrements, an art/science station near the sink complete with art texts and various science implements, and a guided reading table with a large chart paper board to write on. Stations were for an hour and a half, after math. Each child was a member of a group, often dictated by reading levels, and moved through two stations a day, four stations a week. Stations were decided by the objectives in the Instructional Planning guides, but created for the needs of my students. Homework was given every night. Writing was done in workshop style and other subjects were taught with overarching themes, "You covered many, many subjects in science, the rainforest, space, many units, every time was an experiment to try things out and to believe you. So many other ones. It was cool to learn like that," or as Aaron said during his interview, "My teacher was mad cool. I learned fun ways. I had centers. I had recess. I had writing about lots of things. It was hard sometimes too but it was so good, you forgot it was busy, like you were in it and then it was lunch."

My goal for the year was to engage the children with learning through fun and intriguing ways and because I was only going to be there for one year, I felt able to do that. "If I think about last year I think about happy, fun...Being in life, like learning about life and friends," replied Tzeitel. This was exactly the sentiment I wanted to impart. I wanted to be about life and full of laughter. Martin explained how he saw this in action during a focus group meeting:

> **Rose:** Like, when you would laugh at Aaron or us in a good way. Like, you thought life was funny and humorous and that we were funny. Sometimes even when we did something wrong, you would laugh because it was funny. Like, when Aaron sharpened his pencil down to the metal and showed you it to say that the pencil sharpener was eating pencils again. You laughed at him.
> **Martin:** I remember that (laughs). Or like, when I dropped my milk all over the floor and started to cry and you laughed so I laughed cause it was okay. Remember? Don't cry over spilt milk?

Rose: I was eating there too.
Dixie: Yeah and then you said milk was like bad things or something.
Martin: It was funnier then, but you remember, Ms. Wilson?
Ms. Wilson: Because it is. Yes. I do. Sometimes we have to laugh at things that go bad, the only way to make it okay.
All: Yeah, like that. See?
Martin: You know a teacher likes her job if she smiles.

My discipline protocol revolved around one rule: Be Kind. It was stated and repeated over and over again as the only way to be a part of Ms. Wilson's classroom community. Consequences were given for breaking the rule, of course, although most consequences were self-inflicted with coaching from me, of course. My goal was to have classroom learners who were treating each other as like they would like to be treated. Like Daniel told me in an interview, "She was like helping us out and if we don't know the answer, she helps us find it, or she helps us when we like have injuries to our bodies or our minds, or if there is a problem or they are fighting or arguing about stuff. She was good at that. At making us be kind."

What I wasn't good at was time management and preparing those children to leave the confines of my classroom. In a February conversation with my principal, I was asked about how I was preparing my class for the transition to fifth grade. Being that I was hired to help some children who had struggled in school, it made sense she was asking me. I hadn't done a great job preparing them to leave. In fact, other than provide academic preparation and some life coaching, I did nothing to prepare them. I didn't talk to them about it or begin to model "how it might be for them." Nothing changed during the year as if they would live in my classroom forever. I didn't know how to ready them. I must admit it was then I began thinking about this project.

I believe that children have different talents and strengths, weaknesses and struggles, and it is a teacher's job to locate and acknowledge those while building on them. As such, my classroom was a place where we were all responsible for each other and each other's learning. We did not use any textbook with the exception of mathematics. I saw my role as a provider of tasks that move everyone forward. This

meant that very seldom was there one task for the entire class, but different tasks for different people, depending on where they were ready to move. As Aaron put it, "You laughed, and you said stories that helped us get it, and you put stuff in different ways and made it harder for me because I am smart, and easier for [others]. So I wasn't always sure but I would try and look smart because in your class I was smart, not just bad. Everyone was accepted."

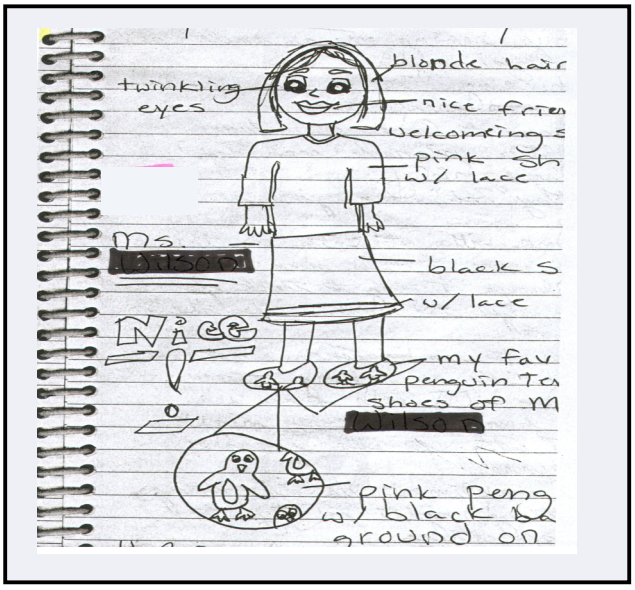
It is good to be African or anything else.
-Bette

Rose shared a complicated idea about my teaching and classroom, one that I must admit I find poetic and wonderful, "Some of us are like pit bulls…and some are poodles and some are not dogs, like mosquitoes or something that no one likes, even the teacher. In your class, we knew that you liked mosquitoes too, so we couldn't be mean to anyone." According to the students in this study, they felt cared for, listened to, and alive in my classroom. It was a positive environment. We moved slowly, but covered the objectives mandated by the state and later, proved our learning on the T.A.K.S (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) test.

My class was known by the fourth grade team as the "hippie class." At first I found this remark insulting, but I must admit that now, I find it divine. It is true. Entering my class you would find millions of what Rose called, "things going on." As Daniel explained it, "You told us all the time we should be truthful and kind. You took me home and told me stuff about me that I forgot a lot. Like I was good and smart," or as Martin told me, "You thought I was nice, kind, respecting student. You told me. I mean, she told me lots about what I was and what I could be, so I knew." Perhaps true, my classroom was not conventional for a classroom at Radliff and as syrupy as it sounds, it did seem to

exist just like the above description, even though there were many times of stress and outbursts.

In conclusion, I admit, I am still pondering this section. I wonder, “Is it too long? Too sweet?” Oh well, it is my story and I’m sticking to it. As a reader, you are right to wonder about my classroom. We were different.



Summary of Section One. Generally speaking, the students struggled to connect with the fifth grade teachers and their classrooms as compared to the experiences they recalled from the fourth grade. Ms. Beaches was seen as a teacher whose classroom was highly organized and rigid, quiet and quickly moving. Like Ms. Beaches, Ms. Bloom’s classroom also moved through the curriculum quickly. However, her classroom was also noted as a place where children felt scared and unsure of themselves, a place where they felt second tier to the rules. Ms. Markowitz’s classroom was lively and child-centered. It was a place where the teacher was on a learning curve along with her students. All of the fourth grade classrooms were seemingly places of warmth and fun, regardless of the varying contextual circumstances. Ms. Bobbie’s room was a place for individuals to connect with their teacher and feel success, Ms. Gypsy’s room a place for rules, but care, and my room, a space for freedom and personal as well as academic growth. All of the descriptions, both the fourth grade and fifth grade classes, are provided her through the

perceptions/lenses of the students. It should be noted that they are not based on any truth, other than that of the children's individual experiences and beliefs.

Section Two:
Emergent Themes in the Negotiation of Transition within the Figured World of School: "We hav to go up u no?"

During data analysis, several themes surfaced showcasing the ways that participants experienced transition to their new classrooms and teachers. This section will elucidate how the students experienced their new classrooms and teachers through the themes: 1) *Match with the teacher*: characterized by instances the children identified as either in line (matching) the goals, intentions, or beliefs of the teacher such as through her humanness, reward system, or challenge preparation; 2) M*ismatch with the teacher:* or not in line (mismatching) the goals, intentions, and or beliefs of the teacher; 3) *Power issues and positioning*: Characterized as the ways and means children spoke about the power the teacher held, utilized or in other ways managed; 4) *Nostalgic notions of their previous schooling*: Characterized metaphorically or through particular reference to the previous years being perfect, always fun, or other large scale modifiers, 5) *Transitions:* Experience of and expression's about moving to a new classroom; and 6) *Transcendent ideas:* Characterized as notions about the world, school, and themselves that are bigger, more worldly, and altogether adult-like in their meanings and theses.

Match/Mismatch with the Teacher

One of the prominent themes in the data was the way in which students and teachers aligned (or did not align) in terms of students' goals and perceived needs and teachers' actions and behaviors. In many ways, students' transitions into their new classrooms with new teachers were influenced by what I came to call *matches* or

mismatches with the teacher and the classroom. While some students had predominately negative experiences characterized by a number of mismatches with their teacher, it is important to note that, in all cases, students' experiences were characterized by both matches and mismatches with their teacher. In this way, "matches" and "mismatches," as I coded them for the purposes of analysis, should be thought of as *instances* (or moments) of match and mismatch. Coding them in this way seemed to illuminate more clearly the nuances of the students' transitions and attempts to align with their new classrooms and teachers.

When students transitioned into a new classroom, with a new teacher, and a new set of expectations, goals, and intentions, it was deemed positive by the students if the teacher matched their prior experiences and personal beliefs within the new classroom domain. Additionally cogent was the positive impact students felt as they engaged with a classroom and teacher that they felt understood what they needed and who they were. Matching with the teacher was not only positive, but created an easier, more fluid transition for the students. Mismatch with the teacher proposed problems for the students when trying to "figure" out the new rules and participation requirements such that they were successful in their new roles. Although both *Match* and *Mismatch* provided evidence towards the ease of transition for the children, the theme *Match* allowed the children an easier, more fluid movement in which they labeled themselves in more positive, successful ways.

Match with the Teacher: "She makes it more lighter."

Across all cases, students remarked upon occasions in which they felt connection or affection for their teacher or a time when their needs were met in some way. These comments were coded as perceived matches with the teacher. Remarks were coded as a part of this theme if they told of an instance, belief, idea, or experience in which the student felt the teacher had seemingly matched a need they possessed. Within this theme, there were three subcategories each referring to a different way the teacher could create a

match between their actions and the student's needs. The essence of these three areas were students' perceived needs for caring and relationship, for recognition and reward, and for academic challenge and preparation.

Match: Need for Relationship (Solidarity): "I want her to be cool with me…like act it."

The children seemed to find a match with the teacher when the teacher treated the students kindly or reached out in an effort to build solidarity with them (such as through humor). Particularly salient were those times when the teacher referenced her "humanness" in some way. These times seemingly permitted the students to see themselves and their needs in the thoughts and actions of the teacher. Clementine said during a focus group meeting, "I like the fact that my teacher is treating us the way she would like to be treated and still keep her role as a teacher. She said that." For her, the statement presupposed the equal treatment of those in her class and allowed her to feel safe and secure that everything was going to be fair, something she believed in and wanted her teacher to enforce. Sophie wrote in her journal about an episode where she felt she understood her teacher, a time she had not seen before, and one for which she could find her teacher's human qualities. She wrote, "Ms. Bloom admitted to something today. Ms. Beaches said something about tying my shoes and Ms. Bloom played nice. It was good today." When the teacher freely disclosed the side of herself that wasn't the perfect, the side without tied shoes, when she exposed her humanness graciously towards a student, (located in the utterance, "she played nice.") students were able to connect with the teacher. Through this connection such as being understanding about untied shoes, they were able to mirror that civility back in comments about the teacher. In addition, when the child felt the teacher was responding in her defense, the child felt cared for, a definite need for humans.

The children also noted humor as one way in which they connected with their teacher, one way that they matched. When the teacher shared a joke, a funny story, a ditty of some sort, and the children "got it," it was a source of connection. Clementine told our focus group, "Well, my teacher usually makes us laugh all the time. When we are doing

our work, she makes it more lighter. It is a lot of work and boring so she makes it funner and stuff." Rose followed, "Yeah, she said once that she was the tall one and Ms. Bloom the short one." At this point, everyone laughed and Rose added, "I like it when they are funnier than each other." The children enjoyed being humorous and found in these humorous moments, a way to connect with their teacher, a way to be on the "inside." Thus, these periods of connecting (or matching) personally through caring and humor became occasions form enjoyment of their fifth grade experiences.

Match: Need for Recognition and Reward: "I want to be like I did a good and she know it."

Interestingly, the students in this study ubiquitously spoke about rewards as a way that teachers showed that they cared about their students. All of the fifth grade classrooms had extensive reward systems targeted at the extrinsic or external rewarding of desired behaviors. These rewards ranged from extra time at recess to doughnuts in the morning. For the fifth graders, the behavior plan that both Ms. Beaches and Ms. Bloom initiated, termed "Beads" by the participants, was seen as an example of the external way these fifth grade teachers rewarded the students for success. Students wanted to be told when they were doing well. Beads were given to the students when they made a 100% on an assignment with different color beads denoting different subjects. The students wore these beads around their neck for the rest of the school to see.

For some students, this reward was enough to match with their need for approval and reward for their accomplishments. Although somewhat temporary as shown in later data, for a length of time, external validation through reward was one way a teacher could gain favor. For example, "We have started "beads" she has gotton specific colores for different subjects. R.-Red SS-Blue S.-Green She is so cool. I think she is the best 5th grade teacher!!" (Bette) A tangible reinforcement such as a colored bead which represented a positive affirmation, or a gift card used in a drawing which one teacher used, acted as a reward, and matched with the desire of the children to be told they were

doing well. They shared that they loved it when their teacher utilized something novel in the classroom to locate and recompense good behavior.

In addition to token reinforcers/physical rewards, students also seemed to connect with a teacher's positive verbal evaluations of them. During an individual interview in October, I engaged in a dialogue with Daniel:

> **Me:** Does your teacher like you?
> **D:** Yes.
> **Me:** How do you know?
> **D:** Because sometimes she says that and acts like that. We are her 'good, little dumplings.'

Here it seems clear that the teachers' words communicate caring to Daniel. Using words and actions that were positive, babying, and endearing seemed to make the students feel cared for and at ease, making them feel like their teacher liked them and that they were a part of something important. When the teacher shared an encouraging and affirming attitude towards the students and the classroom, or rewarded them in some way, the teacher matched with the students' perceived need of recognition and reward.

Match: Need for Challenge and Preparation: "I hope it's hard, but not too hard."

Across the students, there were perceptions—most likely influenced by teachers' notions and proclamations—about how their fifth grade classrooms helped "prepare" them for middle school. This perceived academic and social preparation offered a point for connection or match between the teachers and students.

Bette also shared that she felt good about her classroom when she thought about it as a means of preparation for her future in middle school. "She is being stricke because in middle school its going to be a lot striker. I think she is helping us in a way that will help us later on." (Bette) Here again, Bette was reflecting the need she felt to be ready for the next schooling experience. She hoped that the strictness she experienced in the classroom would help her to be successful later on. Clementine agreed, "I love fifth grade because its really preparing me and others for middle school I think." The children felt a need to

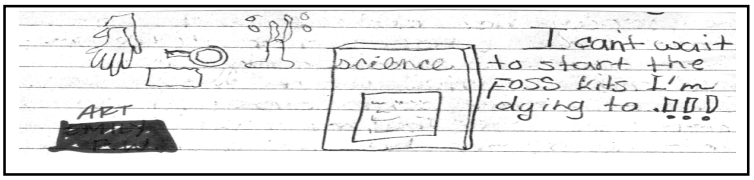
be equipped for the next experience and when they were supplied that preparation, they felt connected to the teacher; they matched.

Suitable preparation according to student needs and abilities allowed the students to feel the proper level of challenge to engender deep engagement with the task. A match would occur when students saw a match between their needed level of challenge and what was provided in similar process to what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) proposed in his notions of *Flow* (situation in which engagement is promoted by a match between challenge and ability). For example, "I actually like this year starting off because they challenge me more. My brain is expanding more," relayed Clementine. She felt that the level of challenge provided in her fifth grade classroom matched what she perceived her need to be, and as such, she was able to find her classroom a good, amiable place to attend. Sophie, like Clementine, noted her fondness for the class when the work was demanding. (I will argue later that if the task is seen as too hard, it is indeed the opposite of a match!) She recorded in her journal; "Schoolwork is easy but challenging at the same time. I'm in a group were reading Bridge to Terabethia. I've already read it but I don't care. I could read it a million times. I heard the next book is going to be a good one! I like it when it is hard and good." When the students perceived a need to be prepared for the next experience through proper challenging, the teacher and the student matched with regards to possessing a content and happy classroom experience. During times they were contemplative about their later needs as middle school students, they could come to an internal understanding about the strictness or seemingly more harsh ways of their classroom with one exception, a child who never did come to understand the "mean and ugliness of the teacher to kids." (Sophie) So, although the children struggled with the transition into a classroom so different than their previous in terms of strictness, they attempted to make their situations mentally better through justification of it being to middle school standards.

Other than offerings of direct challenge, there was one noted instance where a child, Clementine matched with her teacher when she gave helpful critique as a way to inspire or challenge. Clementine described, "I think my past teachers have been showing

off and saying, 'Oh, she's a really good student.' But to Ms. Beaches it is different. She wrote what I needed to work on, to do, instead of like giving me compliments." Later in her journal she followed with, "My teacher is very intelligent. She is probbly my best teacher so far. My previous teachers usully just gave me complaments on my report card and Ms. Beaches follows it up with something good and gives me something to imperove on." For Clementine, the teacher uses a quality appraisal to match her need to improve as a student. She was the only student to assert challenging critique as a possible need to match with the teacher.

The children also reported matching their teacher academically, meaning that the teachers gave tasks or assignments that were in line with the students' beliefs about how schooling should be, that they felt comfortable with their teacher. These examples included instances when the assigned tasks by the teacher were ones that the students liked and felt were worthwhile. One such example was a Texas science program known as FOSS:



Bette wrote in her journal, "It has been ok she is really fine now when we are doing FOSS kit she really is boring but then she gets really nice and cool sometimes." Bette reported a connection to her teacher and enjoyed the class more when they were participating in an activity she liked. Ten of the students mentioned science as a time they enjoyed their classroom, as a time they felt the curriculum was in line with what they wanted and felt they needed. "I like her okay because she is interesting and I can learn a lot more from her in scince. She's alot smarter so I can ask her alot more questions than I can ask my peers," wrote Clementine, "In fifth grade you get tested in science so we get to do alot which is good." Rose also spoke in her journal about science, "It was fun today because we had a cool science project and Ms. Bloom moved my friend to a desk near me for it!" While Clementine wrote about multiple activities that matched with her needs,

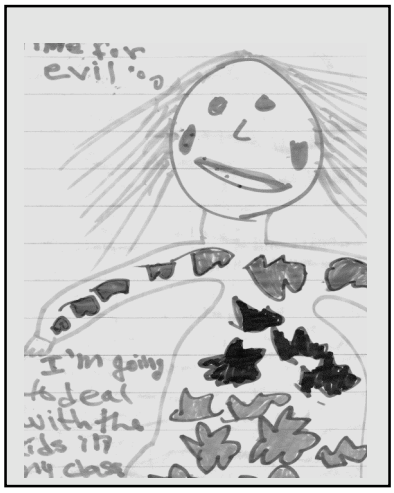
ending her journal entry in October with, "Trust me, in fifth grade you get to do a lot more things," the other fifth graders noted that the only subject that matching academically or by task was science. The students found pleasure and positive emotions with the inclusion of academic tasks in science such as FOSS. When the curriculum matched their psychological need for challenge and movement, including group work, it was noted in journals and during focus group meetings as a match with their teacher. Although the children did not initiate the term *match* to describe their feelings and displays about their teachers, they did answer plentiful questions about if they felt the teacher *matched* them in terms of a belief or expectation. The word seemed to make sense for the children's thoughts about their teachers and allowed them to further meanings I was inquiring about.

In Summary. When teachers were aware and able to meet the needs of the students, students were then able to move into their classrooms feeling secure and connected. Matching the needs of the children with the teacher and her classroom seemed to be a predictor of the ease with which a student could move into the new classroom environment and adjust to the new teacher. It will be illustrated later that although there were instances of these focal students *matching* with their fifth grade teachers, it occurred less frequently than was originally thought would occur in the summer months because of the positive attitudes and proclamations from the incoming fifth graders. At that time, they felt secure of their abilities and the foundations they had to bring into the new context. However, in the fifth grade classrooms, little evidence of *match* occurred. The transition would have been easier, more efficient, and more positive, if such matches were more commonly found.

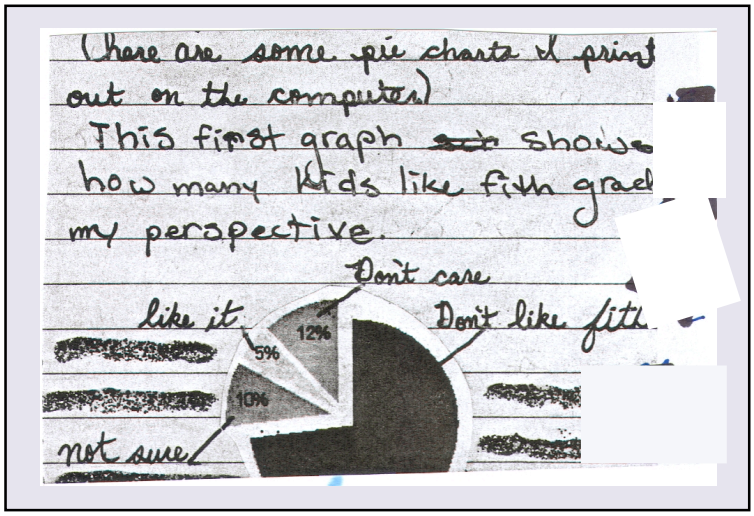
Mismatch with Teacher: Expressions of Discontent:
"It may be good for me, but it's not GOOD FOR ME!"

The children involved in this study spoke their feelings about their classrooms and teachers during their journal entries, focus meetings, and interviews with me and with each other. For them, there was a sense of being "in it together." There was also urgency for me to help them, teach their teachers, or in some other way change their fates. Although there were areas about which they felt good between them and their teachers, most of their comments focused on the problems and mismatches between the teacher and the children and often seemed severe.

Tzeitel explained her drawing, "She just thinks she has to 'deal with us' like we are cattle or chores or something. Like, kids are evil to her. They are like, bad scarecrows."



The sections that follow document the ways the *mismatches* between what the students perceived as a need and what the fifth grade teacher provided. This theme showcased itself in the data in five particular ways: 1) Physical Needs: Recess and Bathroom Privileges 2) Need for time on assignments; 3) Need to feel known and cared for; 4) Need for the teacher to not complain; and 5) Need for teacher expectations to be matched with their perceived skill level.



Rose spent three pages in her journal devoted entirely to pie charts illustrating her perception of the fifth grade experience. It is notable that only 5% were identified as "lik[ing] it [fifth grade]. For Rose and Tzeitel, as well as the other students, fifth grade was hard to figure out, feel a part, and negotiate. Many were sure they didn't like it, but blamed their distaste on comparisons to fourth grade, but most likely, it was not the fourth grade that caused all of the issues, but instead the mismatches with their needs being met.

Mismatch: A Need for Recess and Bathroom Privileges: "Like, I gotta go, man!"

Mismatch with Recess Privileges. A prominent factor that influenced transition ease aired by students was recess, or the lack thereof. Teachers were believed to be in line with children if they, "liked recess too" (Tzeitel) and not in line with the children's needs if they, "take away recess for nothing" (Martin).

Two of the fifth grade teachers, Ms. Beaches and Ms. Bloom, used recess as an incentive for the entire class to finish their work. As such, children rarely received recess because there was often someone who had not completed their assignments. Additionally, those particular teachers took away recess time for bad behavior. Bette explained her issue with this during a focus meeting, "If you don't know something, [Ms. Bloom] says, 'you are out of recess' and not just five minutes, but the whole thing." Bette found issue with this contention because formerly, in fourth grade, only increments of time were

taken away from any student, regardless of the crime. The difference between the notions of the fifth grade teachers, in comparison to their previous experience in the fourth grade, made the transition into the new rules and regulations troubling, especially the lack of recess or its use as punishment. Tzeitel added to Bette's comment, "I feel bad because there are so many words and I can't get it all done sometimes and Rose has to stay in because of me. I'm lucky she is my friend but I don't like the boys about it." For Tzeitel the teacher's decisions to limit the recess of the entire class because of one person, herself, caused her internal angst and peer struggles. Rose was always someone who finished her work and using the rule that, "Finishing your work means you are allowed access to recess," she should have been allowed to go outside. However, Tzeitel felt sad that her teacher often didn't allow anyone to go out if even one person was incomplete in regards to their work, Rose was sometimes not permitted to go. The children were aware of alternatives to the way the fifth grade teachers enacted rules regarding recess and mismatched the teacher's beliefs, expectations, and decisions regarding them. The children felt recess was needed after sitting such a long time indoors and believed teachers who let them have recess were, as Tzeitel claimed, "better for us." Recess was "N-E-E-D-E-D" (Aaron) according to the children.

Students expressed strong feelings about the practice of "recess as punishment" indicating a mismatch in their need for movement, play, and space and the teachers' decisions regarding this time. "I think we need some recess sometimes to make us quieter. Not like just getting on us, but let us go run and talk, then we would be better," (Dixie) to which all the students sitting in the focus group agreed with a, "Yeah!" Access to recess was seen as an important indicator to the children of a kid friendly classroom venue. Rose notified me in her journal about her issues in regards to the lack of recess in the fifth grade, "We only get recess like once a week. We are kids and kids need more time to be outside and play than grownups. That's one thing that bothers me about my teacher, she never lets us stay outside a long time." Bette concurred with Rose's sentiments regarding recess, "It's me again. No recess on M,T,T,F. When are we gonna get some fresh air and get to talk?"

When a teacher allowed children recess, the children felt it was a *match* with a need they possessed. When the teacher used recess as leverage, students wondered why they couldn't have recess, felt it was a mismatch, and like Sophie, "I think she just doesn't want us to have recess and I don't know why!" As Martin put it, "Why don't other teachers than you like recess, Miss Wilson?" Children, while attempting to make sense of recess reduction in the fifth grade found it difficult, thus making the transition into the new context problematic. Although they were in the midst of self-fashioning new selves in the world of the fifth grade, mismatches such as those in regards to beliefs about recess, seemed to be scrutinized. Instead of molding their beliefs to match, they could not embrace the ideas that the new context promoted. However, like Holland et al. (1998) posited, people who make a contextual move form an alliance with each other, instead of with the teacher, to express feelings of disgust and anger. This is exactly what the students did in regards to not receiving recess. Each time they experienced the lack of recess coupled with their beliefs about its importance, began to build stable feelings of anger and upset with the teachers and they communally expressed their angst.

Mismatch with Bathroom Privileges

Identified only twice the mismatch between the perceived bathroom needs of the students and the rules of the fifth grade classroom were not in alignment. The mismatch caused indignation about the situation as evidenced in several journals. Agreed upon with vigor, including long head nods and, "I know, right[s]?" from the focal group students, Tzeitel's comment almost incited a riot:

> **Tzeitel:** It is different [than in fourth grade] because you can't go to the bathroom when you need to. Only when they say you can. But it is maybe wrong because the teacher can go when she needs to but not us. People might have different needs to pee and things. Last year was better cause you could go when you needed to. I…the teacher to trusts you to pee.
> **Others: (**Voices undistinguishable). Yeah, I know, right, yeah…
> **Sophie:** I mean, we are just kids and we have to go sometimes even if we just went. My mom goes all the time

> at the mall. You just don't want to say anything cause you know it is going to be a no.
> **Others:** (Voices indistinguishable). I know! Yeah, yeah…(Many side conversations about the bathroom issues, no words distinguishable other than 'bathroom.'

The need to use the bathroom was a source of contention in the fifth grade, but a seeming match with fourth grade. In their fifth grade classroom, under the authority of their fifth grade teachers, they needed permission, while in fourth grade they left to go at will. Students also saw instances where other adults could go at will, yet they required permission making them upset and stupefied.

In Summary. The first two themes reflect a mismatch between the student and the teacher that is physical in nature. In the fifth grade, the time given for assignments, the procurement of recess as an incentive, and lastly, the freedom of bathroom use were expressed as mismatches with the fifth grade teachers.

Mismatch: A Need for Time on Assignments: "Like %$#%ing slow down!"

One theme of which students spoke was the ways in which they perceived teachers to not be giving enough time on assignments. The speed of the curriculum or the depth of the workload, compared with the time allowed to work on the assignments, was a common negative way the children shared about what was not working well. This need for time not being met was therefore a *mismatch* with the teacher. Bruce shared during the focus group meeting his need for more time in his fifth grade classroom as compared to what he had received in fourth grade saying in a quiet, soft, almost tear-filled voice, "Because my teacher gave me time and understood me. She gave me a lot of time on all my work," and again later he added, "You get time for the assignment. Last year kids that didn't finish their work very well got more time to finish it. She thinks I should hurry up on my work. That I am slow and can't do it fast." Stella also spoke about time, "I wish we could slow down and get it. Last year it was slower for everyone to get it better. I need more time. Don't ya'll?" At this point, several students in the focus group concurred

with a high arched eye brow and a large nod yes. Several children also talked about the speed of the classroom workload during a focus group meeting:

> **Bette:** It was used to going fast. It's that it was just really, really, really, fast." She doesn't give us any time to do things.
> **Sophie:** As soon as we're done with our reading, you have to get out your math and…keep on going on and on and going back to that.
> **Bette:** It's rough when you are rushing to get done with something and finish it; it looks really bad.
> **Clementine:** The assignments are a lot of times stressing because I worry I might not finish it or do good. I might fail.
> **Martin:** I know.
> **Tzeitel:** I can't go fast enough. I just can't even with two hands writing.
> **All:** Laugh
> **Me:** So, do you feel like you are learning?
> **Bette, Daniel, Martin, Sophie, Stella:** Nooooo.
> **Rose:** It is about something else… Like getting it done or something.

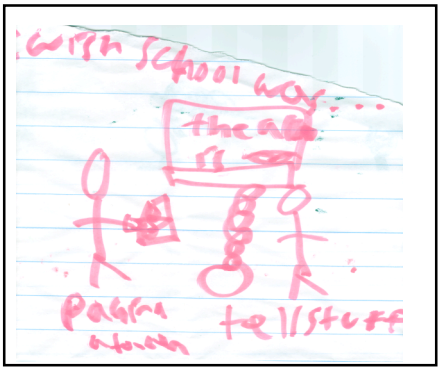
Across all cases, the students felt their teachers pushed them to move too quickly, and they felt that often they were left behind, to not finish or take the assignment home for homework. For the focal students, this left them overwhelmed quite often and feeling like Sophie, who said, "I hate it when she gives us assignments because each one is one more piece we will probably have to do at home." When their teacher did not match these children's needs for increased time, the students felt upset that in turn manifested anger towards the teacher. Students felt a need to not feel rushed and overwhelmed. When teachers, such as a couple did in fourth grade (as illustrated in the data), met the students perceived need for increased time on assignments or gave time deemed proper by the students, they reciprocally found themselves more content. Time management was one way that fifth grade teachers mismatched the needs of their students, causing them trouble as they attempted to transition into a room whose structure and timing was vastly different.

Mismatch: A Need to Feel Known, Cared For, and Otherwise Important: "I ask, she like me? No, is the answer, I think."

Children expressed a need to be known in their classrooms, yet, their comments suggested the fifth grade teachers did not generate a sense of importance, care, or individuality for the students. The need to be seen and heard as an individual incited a sizeable *mismatch* between both groups and complicated the transition into a classroom community. The children involved in this study spoke often about their feelings that the teachers did not know them, could not see them as the people they were, and did not want to get to know them.

The students wanted their teachers to listen to them, to learn about their teacher, to forge a connection. However, as Martin discussed below, he began to see fifth grade as "not that kind of place." He believed that the connection between him and his teacher was strained, and he kept a chain on his thoughts and feelings such that she stayed away.

As Martin explained about this drawing, "I wish school was about telling things and knowing the teacher, like keeping touch with ourselves and them."



"This is the teacher handing out, but a chain keeps her away."
-Martin

These feelings of self-identity loss operationalized the definition by the students of their fifth grade teachers as, "inhuman." The following section is one wrought with emotion and negative experiences, culminating in student's notions of themselves as unloved, uncared for, and unknown in a fifth grade world that belonged to the teacher, not to them.

The students alleged that the teachers this year, " don't talk to us as people" and, " They just don't understand me." These sentiments were voiced often. Because of the mismatch between the children's need for care, concern and personhood, and the insights they had gained through their previous schooling, the children began to describe their

ideas about how it should be, and what they needed but were not getting. Bette described her emotional need to have teachers with whom she could talk. "You feel comfortable with the teacher and you feel like you could talk to the teacher about anything, like with you and the counselor, or like that. But it should be with a teacher so they know you, what you are going through." Here Bette shared that for her, a teacher with whom she could talk about anything, was one with whom she would feel connected. Such a teacher would make her feel cared for, known. However, she later added, "My fifth grade teacher doesn't want to know me. She just wants me to be smart and quiet." For Bette, her fifth grade teacher's inability to talk intimately with her caused her to feel anonymous. In turn, she felt the teacher did not want to know her, or to connect with her. In an interview with Martin, he explained to me why a need such as Bette's was so poignant for children:

> **Me:** You just said that this year's teacher is 'bad.' Why do you think that?
> **M:** Umm…that it isn't you and I got along better with you.
> **Me:** How is that different?
> **M:** It's not you. You were easy to get along with, very easy. You talked to us like we were smart and older and stuff. You made us like adults or something and made us think about what we did and what we wanted to do. Like who to be or something. To see us.

Here, Martin realized in a very adult way what it felt like to "get along" with someone. He sensed that his fourth grade teacher instilled a sense of autonomy within him, a sense of being someone able to make his own decisions and accept responsibility for his own choices. He explained that the teacher helped him to see who he was, to feel known. Tzeitel commented similarly in an interview:

> **Me:** What do you think your teacher thinks about you as a student or person?
> **T:** I don't know. How could I? I mean, she never says anything to me and I never say nothing to her. She doesn't know me.
> **Me:** She doesn't talk to you?
> **T:** Like alone ever. She doesn't like me.
> **Me:** Come on Tzeitel, yes she does.

> **T:** No, Miss Wilson. She doesn't. If she did she would love me. She would say hi to me or something, not make me feel sad and lonely.

Tzeitel's comments showed how students understood how to connect with someone. They seemed to know that to understand someone, one must inquire about what's going on inside them, must know and be sensitive to their thoughts and feelings. Sophie furthered Tzeitel's idea about the importance of listening to show you like someone, to get to know them, and not listening as a way to show you don't want to know them. As she stated in her journal, "I never get a chance to talk to her… my teacher. Ms. Bloom always makes excuses so we can't get up so how could we talk to her. She doesn't want us to and I don't want to anymore. That is over for me. She never sepratly talks to me." Such a comment was not uncommon in the focal student's journals. They took the teachers management techniques (e.g. requiring silence at all times (Tzeitel) or continually asking children to sit down (Martin) as a sign they were not welcome at her desk, not welcomed to speak with her individually. The teacher's managed their classroom and students' actions, but the teacher's actions were interpreted by the children as actions that kept them separated from the teachers.

Sophie found her fifth grade teacher someone who she could not connect with and therefore, one that she did not like. She claimed it was impossible to feel at ease and important in a space where it felt as if she was not cared for. Such a dramatic change from her previous experiences in which teachers found her bright and helpful, made her transition into the fifth grade tough, as it did for many others. In my observations, I too found no instances of students going to the teacher's desk during independent work time. Nor did they raise their hands very often. The teacher walked and scanned the room often however. Regardless of the teacher's observation and meandering about the room, the children did not locate the teacher as someone interested in them. They felt unheard, unknown, and uncared for in their current situations.

In addition to a continual feeling of being unknown to the teacher, Sophie explained in her journal another subcategory of feeling unimportant, being treated unfairly. Aaron said, "She says I am doing things when I'm trying to be good. It ain't fair

and I mean I think she is prejudiced against me. She said on the first day she knew all about me and was ready. I don't like that. I ain't trusted her." Aaron adamantly placed the teacher's uncaring and unfair ways forefront, arguing that she must be poisoned from earlier times. Because the teacher thought he was making trouble even when he was attempting to be good, he felt the teacher did not know him, that her perception of him was static and stable. He felt unable to be seen as a "new" person because his teacher seemed to him to not allow such a transformation. He was unknown because he was already "known." He added that in fourth grade his teacher, "Basically like got mad but then I came in later and weren't mad, like, I was a good kid again. But then she is like, 'You are always bad.' She doesn't say it, but she knows it or something like that." He felt the teacher only knew him from previous experiences, that he never got a clean slate and compared to his prior experience in the fourth grade, his fifth grade teacher did not care for him. Her vision of him was rigid. Even in November he would tell me, "I am better in there, but she doesn't like me. It's good for me but it's not GOOD FOR ME." His use of, "She doesn't like me," represented his way of saying that the teacher didn't know him because in order to be good in her classroom he had to change whom he felt he really was. Aaron recognized all the change for him wasn't bad (in fact, "it's good for [him]"), yet he felt his teacher did not know the real him (emphasized in his voice by a louder, more staccato timber with the highlighting of "GOOD FOR ME."). He found, like others, this perceived meanness towards him mismatched his need to be known.

In addition to feeling unknown, the children found their fifth grade teacher did match with their need to feel important and cared for. As a way that further illuminated why the teachers were perceived as if they didn't care about their students, the children explained situations in which the teachers did not handle situations that the children felt they needed help. Daniel began a discussion:

> **Daniel:** They don't handle nothing. Ms. Markowitz doesn't handle nothing. She just leaves us alone.
> **Aaron:** She never listens to me. Like ever. It doesn't matter what really happened. It's her way only and I'm always wrong. Kids are. Like this morning she didn't even listen to

me about Winnie not giving me the assignment sheet. I was like, what? But she wouldn't listen to me.
Bette: They don't listen to anyone. Well maybe themself.
All: Laughing
Martin: People call me names. They do it every single day and the teacher and no one stands up for me. And they did last year and liked me when you were the teacher. They are calling me bugger boy and kicking me. So I get mad and hurt by them and by no one doing nothing…I get in trouble if I do something bad.
Stella: There are so many times that we aren't being watched. Like they don't care we are getting itchy.

The students in the above excerpt illustrated that when children felt uncared for and/or unimportant, they felt they were left to their own devices in regards to situations. When teachers were perceived by their students as uncaring, or the children perceived themselves as unimportant to the teacher, talk between teacher and student broke down. This lack of discussion and understanding between both parties complicated the transition for the new fifth graders. The children needed increased understanding of the situation and their teacher.

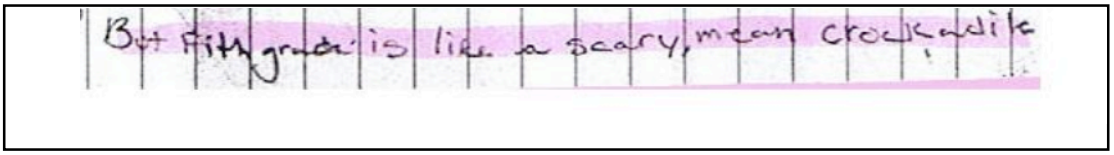
The students also spoke of feeling embarrassed in their classroom. They explicated from their state of embarrassment that their teacher didn't like them, didn't care for them. They felt the need to "save face" or not say anything to reduce the chance of being called wrong in front of their peers. Bette wrote about feeling her teacher is, "really mean and rude. She imberessed me in front of the hole class. I said something to correct her because I saw it before in the book and she said I could correct her when I got all A's and that was really mean." She writes about feeling embarrassed in front of her peers eight more times over the course of the four months. "She is rude to me and mean. She has imberesed me to much. She SUCKS!!!!!!" Over time, Bette began to feel that when she spoke, she had potential to be humiliated and wrote, "I think I will try and not talk but she calls on me and then I am stuck. She really, really, imberesses all of us in front of the class and its really annoying and she hates some of us." Bruce also wrote about feeling embarrassed by his teacher, "She says I am slow and I don't want to be slow but it is embarrassing me lots." For Bette and Bruce, the teacher's perceived

embarrassment of her in the classroom context was demeaning and left Bette feeling that her teacher didn't like her. It also perhaps incited some of the anger and resentment located in her language and statement choices.

The children wanted to love the teacher and to feel they were loved in return. However, it occurred more often as C.C. stated, "I want her to like me, but she doesn't. She can't. I don't think she knows how mean she is. She lies to adults about her love of kids by being a teacher. She doesn't love us. You don't hate things you love." Above all else, the children felt teachers should be there for them, to listen, to help, and to care. If those things were seemingly absent, they were lost and labeled themselves as unimportant. Struggling to understand how the students came to feel as if their teacher didn't find children important, Martin attempted to sum it up for me, "Behind your eyeball, Miss Wilson, is good care and behind theirs, is mean fireballs. We like care, not fireballs." The students' experiences with their fifth grade teachers were, in Martin's terms, "mean fireballs," which created a tough transitory period into the new context, especially when compared to the "care" children such as Martin felt was a part of their term in the fourth grade.

Overall, the children expressed that their fifth grade teachers were not paying attention to them, weren't involved in their worlds, and thought they were unimportant. Transitions were complicated by the ways the teachers left the children to flounder in the world without guidance, to negotiate it alone. The schism between what the children knew and experienced in the fourth grade, when juxtaposed to their current fifth grade situation, only complicated their transition.

In Summary: This theme was overwhelming in evidence for the feelings the children had of being "unliked, detested, horrible, and hated" by their fifth grade teachers, most specifically Ms. Bloom. To share the depth of this feeling, Sophie wrote:



and found internet pictures which she pasted in her journal:

Like Sophie, emotional needs became complicated to express in their fifth grade classrooms because the teachers were seen as not open to them. As such, many children used their journals as the outlet for previously suppressed emotions, like Sophie did. Children wanted and often felt as if they did not receive care, importance, and individuality from their fifth grade teachers. As such, the transition to the new grade level was complicated by feelings of not being cared for. All except Clementine struggled to understand why the teacher might have, as Tzeitel said, "trouble loving kids."

Mismatch and Teacher Complaints: "Don't say bad stuff, geez."

An interesting theme that arose in the data was the children's outright anger when their fifth grade teachers complained about them, as students, children, and a class. Their irritation was compounded when the current teacher made critical remarks about their previous and teachers. The fifth grade teachers were said to make derogatory statements, in particular, about the fourth grade teachers, "not teaching them anything, letting them do whatever they wanted, and/or not preparing them to be good students." The students saw this as disrespectful to not only their past teachers, but to who they were are students, their whole schooling history. Negative comments from their teachers about the students' pasts brought about feelings of being discarded as whole people.

There were two ways the students discussed their teacher's complaints in the classroom. Namely, they iterated that their teachers complained about the students' past

teachers (specifically, their fourth grade teachers) as not being good or to permissive and that they criticized the current fifth grade classroom as a whole. Both were seen by the children as disrespectful, and mismatched with the children's thoughts about history as important and that it should be respected. It was not okay, according to the students, to damage someone's reputation, to insinuate that one comes from poor school breeding, or to be rude and disrespectful to any teacher or adult. For the children, some things, such as their previous teachers, were sacred. Because they had developed relationships with their former teachers, and many of them found those previous relationships more positive, the children were hostile about how misaligned/mismatched the students were with their fifth grade teachers.

The children's comments about feeling mismatched with their teacher surrounded the way their teacher made objections to their past schooling history. These observations were recorded in several journal entries, and were described in focus meetings as ways the teacher did not respect them or others. Sophie journaled in September, "She kept complaining about 2/3rds of the classes work (not me but I got it too). She said that we should go back to 4th grade work level." Such comments by the teacher were common in the journals and were always met with deep frustration by the students. "Ms. Bloom always says we aren't up to fifth grade work that we should go back to fourth grade. But I don't know why because we do what she says and do it the best I can." The children felt remarks such as Sophie's and Rose's were insulting to their esteem as fifth graders as well as inappropriate for any teacher to make. In addition, teacher comments such as, "They might had let you do it in 4th grade but not in my 5th grade class (C.C.)," also generated anger in the children. "I want to macke her stop saying Ms. Gypsy didn't help us!!! It's scary," wrote Bette. Tzeitel began candidly in our focus meeting:

> **Tzeitel:** She keep saying things about the 4th grade teachers being easy and not teaching us anything. She always say that!"
> **Rose:** I know!
> **Tzeitel:** I don't like it.
> **Bette:** I know she just keep saying like she didn't teach us nothing and we just played and danced and didn't do work or didn't do well. I mean, I passed my test.

Daniel: I would be scared of her. She makes the good of last year be bad.
Rose: She makes big things small. Like, if she saw us once in the hall talking then we are a talker and the teachers doesn't know how to handle the kids.
Bette: Oh and I can't stand her hating on Ms. Gypsy. Like, she said it was like the teachers weren't even there. That we got to do whatever we wanted. She's, like, saying that everybody in fourth grade was bad and the teachers were bad.
Me: How do you all feel about that?
Bette: I just feel bad about it because she didn't really pay attention to us because the lines, no one was bad in the lines. So maybe she was just paying attention to the bad classes and she thought, since they're bad, they have to be bad.
Tzeitel: I don't like it because she makes me think like my mom is bad. You spend lots of time in school and a teacher, well, like my teacher, you, was like my mom.
Aaron: Yeah, you don't dis your mom. Dis, Dis, Dis. (laughs)
All: Laugh.

The above extended focus group excerpt illustrated the depth of anger the children had towards the way their fifth grade teachers spoke about their former teachers. Daniel believed he would be afraid of a teacher who spoke of his former teachers in such mean ways and Rose posited that she felt the fifth grade teachers based judgments about their former teachers based on limited information. Bette was angry that her current teacher was mistaken about the facts concerning the experience in fourth grade. And Tzeitel and Aaron spoke about the uncomfortable feelings they had when their teacher spoke ill about their other teachers because both thought of their ex-teachers as family. The students seemed to express that when the fifth grade teachers made objections about their past teachers, they were being disrespectful to their family, their past schooling family. Especially if they had enjoyed and felt they learned in the prior classroom, they found such comments offensive.

In Summary. The student's felt the label of "teacher" included all kinds of teachers, past, present, and future. If respect was merited for the current teachers, then it was also merited for other varieties. The sense of segregation that the fifth grade teachers placed

on their rooms as above the other classes, especially those of the fourth grade, primed the children to not feel secure in their beliefs about, and love for, their former teachers. Much like a person's mother, they felt they were given a teacher and that teacher was like family. As such, one does not degrade (or as Aaron said, "Dis"), their family, whether through blood or "adoption." The lack of understanding the children's beliefs about their former teachers caused a large mismatch between the fifth grade teachers and the focal students. Because students felt their teachers did not understand their values, they in turn felt mad and hurt. As teachers, it is important that children are accepted and encouraged to enter the classroom as a whole person, one with a culture and a history, both of which are constructed through the worlds of school. These teachers made troubling statements about fourth grade teachers perhaps in attempts to alleviate some of their own personal woes about the expectations placed on them in regards to student achievement. Yet instead of creating a space of heightened motivation and engagement for the students such that they would be able to move quicker and understand more, it founded a mismatch and another domain of misunderstanding between the students and their teachers. The transition into their classroom suffered as such comments disabled the children's ability to feel as if they were enough, valued, and not just a complaint. Such problems made the transition increasingly complicated.

Teacher Expectations and Mismatch: "She likes it quiet for learning."

The students' feelings about the teacher expectations, in the form of behavior (what being a "good" steward in the classroom meant to the fifth grade teacher) lesson-planning (what the fifth grade teacher did in the classroom), or the teacher's perception of the students' abilities (how the fifth grade teacher established their ability in subject areas versus their perceived belief about themselves). Expectations, in this category are described as the notions the teacher had, as perceived by the students, about her classroom and the students contained within it, ways that prescribed certain ways of being towards both during the school day. What the children expected to occur in the classroom and the actual classroom experience in the fifth grade, did not match causing

angst during the transition into the new domain. Because fifth grade seemed immensely different than their previous experiences with schooling, these children struggled to understand how to act and what to expect in fifth grade, particularly in the area of teacher expectations. In this way, the children's expectations affected the ways they perceived their teacher's expectations.

The behavioral expectations seemed inappropriate to the children and were a source of mismatch for the new fifth graders. As a former teacher, I know children often feel that consequences and expectations are unfair or inappropriate. However, in light of the participants' conversations held in this study, behavioral expectations that seemed to come out of anger, perceived as being exercised as a way to be mean, were a problem when the children confronted them as they tried to move between known and unknown spaces. For example, C.C. wrote, "She yells to get us to do things," and she, "is so strict we can't be kids or even smile. Like, she gives tests to keep us quiet." In Ms. Bloom and Ms. Beaches' classrooms, "at least she gives one test a day, so that way we have to be quiet a lot because we are waiting…like, for other kids to finish" (Rose). One of Ms. Markowitz's students said, "She likes it very quiet all the time. Like we are taking tests." Although I never noted in my observation notes, testing during my visits, the room was noted as; "It is so quiet in here all the time!" All the fifth grade teachers seemed to want a silent classroom. The teachers' need of silence was so strong tests were given and in one of the rooms, silence was, "just expected" (Daniel). The students perceived the testing situation in their classrooms as a part of the teacher's ploy to keep the class silent. They felt their classrooms were silent places, where interaction was discouraged and silence was enforced through the use of tests. "By giving a test, like, it is silent for the rest of the time cause there is someone working. She says that, 'Be quiet, there is so and so still working on their test" (Bette). The expectations for sustained silence caused trouble for the students who had never had such a quiet, test-driven classroom before and for whom the teacher seemed to hear everything.

Rose also talked about a behavioral expectation that seemed to her to not match with what would be expected of any other person, "She expects you like whenever she

says like stop or whatever, she expects you to right then, that second, not two seconds. If you don't, she'll get M-A-D. Really mad." The teachers were seen as people who had high expectations for behavior and who wanted the classrooms to be quiet spaces for children to "be seen and not heard (C.C.)" in ways that did not feel fair or appropriate to the children and thus mismatched with their expectations about what would happen as they transitioned in the new classroom. Such a change in expectations was traumatic for the students, making them feel unsure and insecure in the knowledge they had about schooling, classrooms, and teachers.

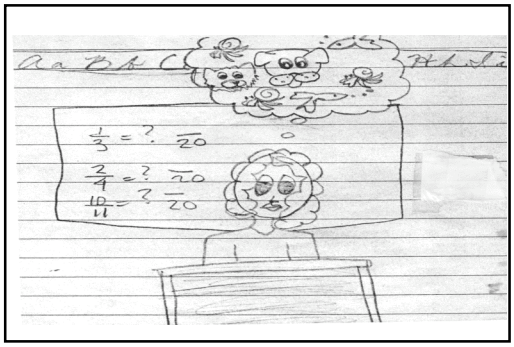
The mismatch in behavioral expectations led to another issue regarding the activities the teacher planned as lessons. The lesson plans that the fifth grade teacher made seemingly did not match the children's expectations of what should occur in the classroom. This mismatch of lesson planning was discussed in the focus groups and interviews as topic choices, grouping choices, and activity level and was a linked to the participants' previous classroom experiences, specifically those from their fourth grade class. Because of the immense differences in behavior, lessons, and perceived abilities of each individual child, the transition into the fifth grade was complicated and more complex than merely moving physical spaces.

For example, the fifth grade classrooms were more teacher-centered than those in their fourth grade experience. The teacher, with little if any, child initiation, selected topics of study and for writing. As I wrote in my observation journal, "She gives them a list of writing prompts to choose from and they pick, mark it off. If you have to write all of the topics from the list, do you choose the best first or the worst to get it out of the way? I wonder if they like being given the topic?" C.C. wrote about having no choice when writing:

> My teacher barely ever lets us write. I don't think she likes writing. That's very hard for me, because I love writing. If we never write in class, then how am I supposed to get better. She gives us topics, but not anything like real for writing. Just worksheets with writing. She could let us write when we are done with out work, but she doesn't. We just sit there and read!

For Bette, it wasn't the topic that bothered her, but instead the lack of an entire subject, writing, that she had spent much time the previous year engaged in. Bette found it frustrating that her teacher did not sanction writing as an allowable activity in the classroom (She even had her journal taken away at one point for writing at an inappropriate time.) Also revealed were the mismatches between how the children thought the lessons should be structured and the way they actually were. Sarah showed how her mind could wander when she felt bored in her illustration.

"It is so boring in there and it doesn't have to."
-Rose



Strong personal disagreements with the way fifth grade lessons were taught were expressed as being, "boring" or "lame." As Rose said, "It's like this inside voice is telling you, "I'm bored, and, It could be more funner to learn. It's like I know it can and you can learn too." Bette knew from previous experience what fun and engaging lessons should be like, and in her current experience it was not being provided. But, she still held hope that her teacher, "could learn" the things she felt were good teaching practices.

Bette followed Rose's comment with, "Yes, and she says it is going to be so much fun but then it isn't." The children felt upset they had had experiences in previous years in which school had been fun or interesting and that now, it was not so. "My teacher doesn't know any good activities to do with us. But, maybe she just doesn't know how to teach that, because it can't be too messy or too loud," penned C.C who attributed to the teacher the excuse of not wanting the activity to be "too messy or too loud." The ways lessons were planned, and topic choices within those plans, did not match with children's expectations, with how the class lessons were chosen and how they felt while a part of those lessons.

Lastly, children spoke about expectations in terms of ability or perceived ability. In these examples, the students verbalized instances when their teacher's perception of their ability and their perception of their ability mismatched. For example, Martin wrote, "Shes tret you like a 8th grader the tings you know arnt smarte and then other tings are win she says so like obgectvs" [She treats you like an 8th grader. The things you know aren't the ones that make you smart in her class. But other things do, the objectives the teacher says do]. Martin was one of three who wrote about how their fifth grade teacher treated them as older than they were or as Stella added during a focus group, " we aren't stupid, but we aren't sixteen." Bette entered in her journal an excerpt about feeling the class was not well suited for the individuals in it. She noted, "She is so bossy with us and expects high grades from everybody, even those that are kinda dumb and might not need the same thing and that's a bad expectation." As Bette noted, classrooms should be places where levels of academic prowess are accepted and encouraged to grow. Instead, these children felt their fifth grade teachers did not allow for individual differences that according to Bette, was "a bad expectation." Daniel articulated his worry about his friend Stella and the expectations the teacher had for her, "When it is harder, people cry. Like, one time we had this hardest thing, and Stella couldn't think of anything to say, and she cried because she wanted to conference." Expectations for Stella were inappropriate for her perceived abilities and there was not a strategy, such as a conference, to allay her trouble. Bette proposed in her journal that her teacher, "really like[d] the GT [Gifted and Talented] people in [their]class and gives them really cool books to read and things to do. I think she is mean to normal kids and dummer kids and nice to only smart ones." This notion of smart versus not smart indicated a mismatch in the teachers' perceptions of abilities and needs and those of the students' perceptions of themselves. Furthermore, the ways the teacher individualized instruction, low and high with marked differentiation of instruction and activities (such as having only the high groups engaged with real books versus leveled readers) did not match with the perceived expectations of the children who felt as Bette noted, "Everyone should get to read good books not baby ones even if they are easier." For the students, not being able to participate in certain activities that seemed

like those they had experienced in previous grades and remembered as engaging, made them feel upset. Things such as not being allowed to write when there was "free time," or read a favorite text, frustrated the students. Thus, the transition into fifth grade was rife with places in which the children did not know how or why the teacher chose to enforce behavior expectations, lesson planning choices, or ability grouping in ways contrary to their prior experiences. This caused transition woes that befell each of the focal students in different ways.

The teachers' static expectations about who the children were seemed to also be a bone of contention. Students spoke about the teachers, "judging them (Tzeitel)" and that, "the teachers don't ever forget a little thing! (Sophie)." As Rose explained, "I think they are judging. Like we could be good sometimes but if we have one bad time, they do it like we are always bad, always," and Sophie agreed:

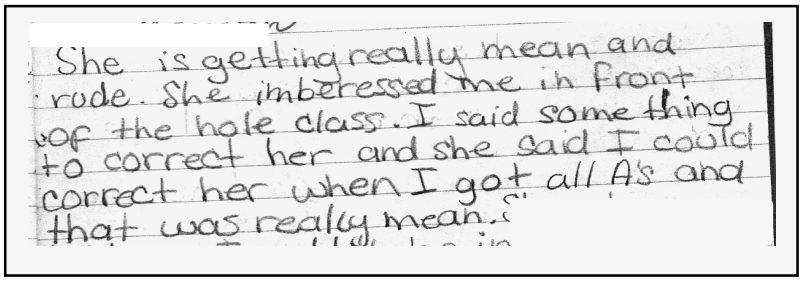
> Like they hold it against you, like if you got a bad grade once or whatever, they'll talk about it if you do bad on something else. Like say, 'You did bad on the other assignment. You are going to fail if you aren't careful.' Sometimes you have a bad day and sometimes a good day, right?

Several others echoed this sentiment, saying that they felt the teachers held things against them and were unchanging in their mindsets about certain children. The children reported that the fifth grade teachers had rigid notions of them. Their teachers were people who did not leave room for them to grow or change and made them feel trapped. I asked, "Several said that you feel the teachers hold things against you, especially Sophie. How do ya'll feel about that?" All of the children felt it was true that the teachers, "decide about you and then, that is it," as Dixie iterated. In addition, Tzeitel, Rose, and Bette all spoke about how they felt Sophie *was* picked on. Bette even wrote in her journal that the best days are when Sophie is absent because she doesn't, "have to feel bad for her best friend getting all picked on and stuff by the teacher." Students believed that if the fifth grade teachers gained a bad perception of a student, the student would be stuck in that description "forever" (Martin). According to the fifth graders, it did not seem as if their teachers' perception were created from anything other than academic achievement,

ability. If you were someone who achieved, you received seemingly better treatment than others. Those in Ms. Bloom and Ms. Beaches' classes reported this pointedly. It has already been shown through previous data that children's feelings of doubt were intensified if they felt uncared for or unknown. Here, the expectations that the teacher had for them engendered those feelings, and mismatched with the expectations that they had for their teachers.

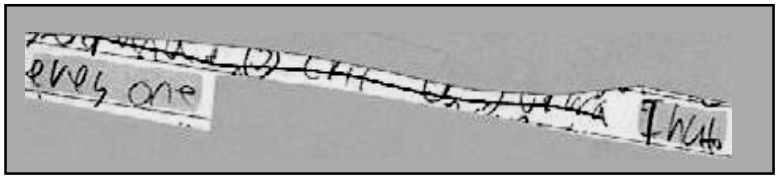
In Summary. The first two themes reflect a mismatch between the student and the teacher that is physical in nature. In the fifth grade, the procurement of recess as an incentive and the lack of freedom in regards to the bathroom, were expressed as mismatches with the fifth grade teachers. Although many views expressed by the students could have been coded as mismatches with the fifth grade teachers, the ones I have described above were assigned to this theme because the students had made specific mention to a previous teacher who they felt were closer aligned with their needs. Also the students expressly situated the past experience as "better than" or "good" in comparison to their current experience with both bathroom and recess privileges. Because the children felt at ease with, and as if the previous experience was better than the current one, the transition into the new rules of the fifth grade classroom were perceived as "different in a bad way" (Bette). As students lost personal freedom and agency, the transition became more complicated, and the roles they had to negotiate, fraught with issues as they attempted to make a transition into the fifth grade world.

Perceptions of Teacher Power


She is getting really mean and rude. She imbetressed me in front of the hole class. I said something to correct her and she said I could correct her when I got all A's and that was really mean.

Bette's quote begins this section because it illustrates the point of the section, that for these fifth graders, when teacher's wielded power, they felt lost and hurt. Classrooms can be tough places to be. They are complex social environments. From the data in this study, power was a frequent theme of discussion by the focal students. Power, for purposes of this study, encompassed four areas: how the teacher enacted her authority in the classroom as perceived by the students (authoritarian, democratic, or permissive), what emotions the students felt were instilled in their classrooms, how students located "truth," and the negative and positive outcomes of such experiences in the classroom. Like Delpit (1988) listed, there are five understandings about power, all I believe, are relevant to this study. According to Delpit: 1) Issues of power are enacted in classrooms, 2) There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a "culture of power," 3) the rules of power are a reflection of the rules o the culture of those who have power, 4) If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier, and 5) Those with power are frequently least aware of—or at least willing to acknowledge –it's existence. Those with less power are most aware of its existence (p. 282). For Delpit, like the children in this study, power was particular to the world in which the students were a part of, namely fifth grade. Within fifth grade, there were particular ways the teachers wielded their power which will become evident throughout this section.

Teacher authority and power in these classrooms were indicative of the problems children had in making the transition into the new context. Children struggled to make sense of the teacher's power to control them and produce fear within them. From these problems, the children wrestled with knowing when the truth should be told, with feeling the might engage in negative behaviors such as wanting to "hit the teacher bad," and with self-degrading statements such as:



In the children's views, power resided in the hands of the teacher. As Clementine stated, "I always worry before I know, even though I can't change it." The teacher was the one who decided how, when, and if things were to occur. They found this hard to take, noting feelings such as Aaron, "It's like I am a little dwarf star. Like the planet Pluto. It tries to be better than everyone but it is just a little rock and gas. All lonely." Teachers were seen by the students to be above them, to be in control and in charge of them. Bette wrote, "I feel between a frown and a smile because I am tired of hearing my teacher yell to get us in control of us." Later in a focus meeting as the children were talking about being in charge, "I'm so bitter about her being in charge of me!" Daniel continued, "I'm not in charge of anything." The teacher having power OVER the students created a struggle for the kids. It was hard for them to accept, especially coming from fourth grade classrooms whose goal was, as Ms. Bobbie stated, "To get them to be critical consumers of the world." Therefore it was hard for the children to accept and find value in their fifth grade domains. In the next sections, five ways the students talked about power are introduced respectively: 1) as a tool to control, 2) as fear producing, 3) as truth confusing, 4) as negative behavior inducing, and 5) as a beneficial force in their lives.

Power as Control: "Techers can chose but kids can't."

The students saw the teacher's power as a form of control. In several focus group meetings students took on the voices of their teachers, mocking their use of control. "How many times do I have to tell you? You have ears, right?" mocked C.C. to which Daniel added, complete with head wobble and furrowed brow, "You aren't in first grade! Tie your shoe!" Ten of the students used statements such as those to show how controlling children seemed vanguard for their teachers. Additionally, all of the focus students found such statements incredibly funny, an experience they all had had at one time. Bette began one focus group with another instance that she thought everyone might have had. She stated that it had been, "bugging her forever":

> Miss Wilson, like don't correct her. Like she says, 'I have a degree. When you have one, come and talk to the class.'
> My teacher last year said to look something up and see who

> was right and sometimes she didn't know. But Ms. Bloom is not like that. It's so degrading and bad. I mean, I can't have a degree. I'm 10!

The children's sense of the teacher's power was enhanced through comments made by the teacher to them. The statements were degrading, and yet, because of their perceived position beneath their teacher, they did not feel that they could tell the teacher. However, they enjoyed and found comfort in telling each other and laughing together at their own misfortune as fifth grade students.

Many of the decisions the teachers made were seen as a source of control. As Bette wrote, "I'm in a reading group with kids that don't read good and I do so it's really weird that I'm with them and not the smart ones and I want to be whit them so bad. Because they are reading really cool books the teacher picked for them." C.C. stated, "When we go to the library our teacher has to approve our books. We can't get what we want, really." Decision-making was not seen as in the hands of the students, as Martin stated: "You have to do whatever the teacher says." To which Clementine responded, " They're mind-controlling us man. They want to make us robots." This conversation was a very heated one in which the children were talking over each other, and all seemed to have something to say. I interjected, "What do you guys mean? They can't keep you from being human." Rose began, "Miss Wilson, Miss Wilson. Yes they can. They can do anything. They have power to make you into anything they want you to be. Like Hitler did. Persons didn't believe that either but it happened with that girl we learned about…Anne Frank." Manners of using power led the students to feel control as out of their hands, positioning them as Aaron indicated, "A rat in a lab with experiments."

A sense of a lack of control in their environment caused several children to describe a fifth grade classroom where, "The teacher is in charge of everything," and where, "It's all her [the teacher]. She is in all the control. We don't have any control over choices of what she wants to do with us, for us. Words such as, "enforcement" and "demands," were used in statements to describe teacher's power and control in these classrooms. Instances such as with the cafeteria monitor were proffered as proof of these propositions:

> **Sophie:** Miss Wilson! Remember Ms. Bloom said it was wrong for teachers to be friends with kids. Then the lunch monitor won't come by our table anymore.
> **Bette:** She said that the lunch monitors aren't allowed to be friends. That they need to do their jobs only.
> **Bette:** Yeah and then she said it to someone and got the lunch lady in trouble because she liked us and was nice.
> **Rose:** Now she doesn't come around our table anymore.
> **Bette:** She wont talk to us anymore.
> **Rose:** That's too much control cause she's like picking our friends or something.

Students felt the teachers were in control of decisions about them and their friends. Their teacher could decide when or if they went to recess. As Jacqueline stated, "Well, my teacher is like, if one person is talking, she will take time off recess. Like we will have to practice being in a line, stay still in the line." Aaron also supplemented, "Oh yeah. Like you get X's and you don't get no recess. I never get no recess no more. You don't get no mad drill [a math race game]. You don't get nothing. It's basically, like, being in a pile of, you know?" Students described their teacher's control in many ways, through limiting recess time, specials (Art, Music, P.E., and library) time, experiments, friends, and free time such as choir or basketball practices, which mismatched their perceptions of how schools should be, as well as demonstrated teacher as power relations. It crossed into all themes, and over all boundaries.

Any time the teacher designated something as outside the core curriculum. They also explained explicitly to me about the teacher's power:

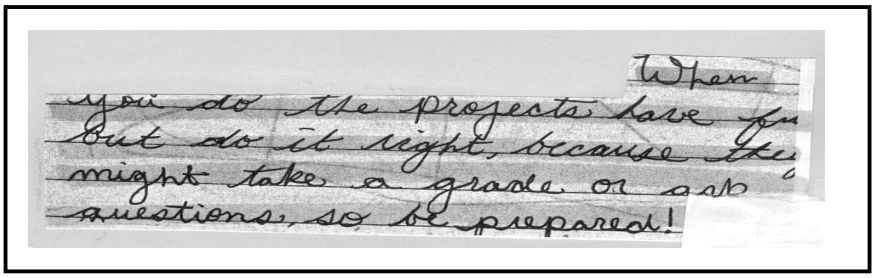
> **Sophie:** "Miss Wilson. Geez, you get sent to the office!
> **Clementine:** Or they just get on your butt and give you bad faces.
> **Aaron:** Hell yeah, they can make you go to the alternative school. I've been there and it ain't a good place.
> **Rose:** You have to do it again and again or stay after school forever.
> **Daniel:** Yeah and they can make you sit against the wall or not do the experiment or whatever they want. They can kick you out.
> **Rose:** They can but we can't make them do something. We can't change them at all.

> **Stella:** Yeah. That's not good or fair. Like on a bar graph it is really, really not.

Comments surrounding power and control were highly influential in the data. They seemed to elicit feelings of powerlessness and insignificance in the children. Like Rose said, "Because kids learn better if the teachers are nice and we have some control of things. Like it could be fake, but we think we do. Last year it was like we had to choose some things. It makes sense that way. Like, if you went to a teacher meeting, and the lady was like mean, you wouldn't learn. But we are stuck."

Power as Fear Producing: "She's like, 'Booga-Booga!'"

The students talked of fear in the classroom specifically because of the power their teacher had and used. Seeing the power as in the hands of the teacher, the children felt they had no recourse. "We are always good, no matter what cause you don't want the demon to come out and get you…to say things like, 'You don't know what you're talking about.' She has the power to say that," explained Sophie. Martin added, "Everybody is scared of her." Rose wrote in her journal:



Aaron talked in his interview about a similar feeling, "It's like I'm scared because I'm mad but… It's like I'm scared and mad. Like I just wanna punch the school down or mess the teacher up. She is so wrong and no one tells her." The perceived inability to not tell the teacher about their feelings and the new context made for a tough classroom environment, where the children felt stifled.

The children noted feeling scared of their teacher and the power she held. " I never, ever, ever, thought a devil would scare somebody but it changed." To which

everyone laughed. They spoke of not being able to say how they felt in the fifth grade classrooms because the teacher decided what was allowed and what was not. Mona wrote, "How I think I feel right now is mad or firie [fire] is because I trying to yell or scream but I can't so I hold it inside." They shared feelings of worry because of the ways teachers enacted power. Stella wrote in her journal, "I have been having lots of worries and troubles in fifth grade. I don't like how I cant say anything or be myself because she doesn't like myself." Stella had begun to take the teacher's power as an indicator of herself as not worthy. Dixie talked in the focus group meeting about how, "She is a new teacher to me and causing me stress, like, maybe it would not work out good between us, like she doesn't want us to have any control of ourselves. But I am a person, a good person… And I can be trusted." Bette shared, "My mom says she is going to leave me at school until I get done worrying cause I worry about things here." They experienced power as a negative way to control them, making the classroom a fearful place to be. Daniel even acted out how the teachers, "eyeball them in mean ways, with fire and bullets and icicles coming out," and several children in he focus group made sounds (like phantom growls and "booga-booga" noises) as they described their teacher. Power was used by the fifth grade teachers to control the children and through making them afraid, the children perceived a loss of their sense of self and agency.

Truth and Power: "You always used to tell the truth was better. Now, it's only a sometimes thing."

Notions of what truth is and who controls truth were discussed in our focus group meetings. The children spoke of truth being something inside of oneself, something factual to you. There are two kind now though Miss Wilson," said Martin, "Truth, like you know it is right in your body and heart," as compared to, "Truth, like the teacher says goes is." So, although they understood what the truth entailed, saying what is so for them, they did not always tell the truth to the teachers because they worried about the teachers' power to decide what the truth was. Sophie explained:

> Once I told her she already picked up [the assignment]
> from everyone, but I hadn't finished, but now I had, and

> she talked loudly about me to everyone. I could have just turned it into the basket, but I told her. Wrong choice, Sophie! Next time, I just walked up and pretended to throw something away and tuned it in. That worked better. Or, one time I raised my hand to say that what she said was wrong because the book said it different, and I had read the book, and she just looked at me like a dragon in her nose. It's like that, Miss Wilson. She decided that I was a liar and her the truther.

I interpreted Sophie's example as showing that she very well knew what the truth was but because of the teacher's power to shame her publicly in front of her peers, she later amended her strategy to slipping the homework paper into the stack of papers already turned in. Bette spoke of a situation, similar to Sophie's, in which her notions of truth were tested, "One time my work was like a week late, and then she got really mad at me. But then my mom came for the conference, she was, like, all nice about it, (imitating) 'Now Bette remember, you ought to have your work in on time,' but she was screaming at me in class." Examples such as these showed that the students were confused about the truth in their fifth grade classrooms, especially in Ms. Bloom and Ms. Beaches'. As a result the children began to speak about changing the truth to fit the situation. Sophie wrote in her journal about her, "church feelings" being at odds with what she felt needed to happen in the classroom to be successful. The examples illuminated how deeply children, such as Sophie, harbored feelings of the mismatch of power with the teachers. In the beginning of the year, they saw truth as something you knew inside and, "could tell the teacher," (Martin) but by November, they were distinguishing "good times" for truth telling and "bad times" (C.C.).

The power of the teacher to decide what was permitted in her classroom, made Sophie construct a new way of handling herself such that she did not have to endure the teacher's anger, the degrading remarks, the hurtful stares of the other students. Two of the other students would write in their journals about their sadness when Sophie got in trouble. Evidently, it was not uncommon for the teacher to municipally admonish students who did not do as asked further dividing the power of the truth from the children. Children seemed to identify with each other as "martyrs of truth": they had

given up the need to tell the truth under certain circumstances, just as they saw the teachers do. Students worried about how truth was compromised because of the teacher's power:

> **Tzeitel:** You told us to tell the truth always. And then you would be happier to know and to help us be better next times, start fresh like forget it. And we had to do that for other people to.
> **Sophie:** This year we are afraid to tell the truth.
> **Rose:** Maybe we are afraid cause they can do things like yell or embarrass us.
> **Sophie:** She might kill us.
> **Me:** Now come on ya'll. They can't kill you. Don't you believe in the truth, like the truth will set you free?
> **Sophie:** No. It doesn't. It sits you in the principal's office.
> **Martin:** Yeah where they wont listen to you even if it is the truth.

In the children's response to having little power in the classroom, truth had come to seem moldable. As Sophie summed it up, "We can't do anything. We have no power. Sometimes I want to scream back, but not this year. Nope."

Several children spoke about negative feelings about the uses of power in their classrooms and the behaviors they sometimes felt they needed to suppress that they imagined when feeling powerless. Phrases such as, "punching a wall," "beating the teacher (or sister) up," and, "not wanting to come to school" were expressions of these negative ideas. Children who had been assiduous in their attendance the year before, such as Rose who only had one absence last year made comments such as, "I don't want to go to school. It's like the first time ever. Weekends are better. I like the weekends better." Bette concurred in her journal, "She is making me not want to come to school." The children often referred to thinking about hitting people to let out their anxieties and frustration and not coming to school in attempts to avoid the feelings school had stirred. Comments ranged from, "First I want to kill the teacher," (Sophie) and "Believe me! Expesiale with other students some times you just want to hit them!" (Bette) to "I feel angry inside and I don't know why but like bubbling," (Rose) and "Everybody knows me. Every-body. Because I am, like, mad and hate how she is the queen or something.

Like, I am a superhero to people. I'm smart and can do things and not get caught. Superman from the pen. An S and a P (draws letters in the air)" (Martin). Children had come to see others in the classroom who subverted the authority of the teacher and did not get caught as idols, heroes of sorts. Occasionally the children acted on the more mild of these ideas, such as writing a "nasty comment about the teacher in [their] journal" (Bette). However simply contemplating such ideas, the ways power was used in the fifth grade classrooms did not seem associated with the positive growth of children.

In Summary. Teachers' power led to thoughts and actions that were not in line with the positive development and expansion of good citizenship schools seek to promote. Instead, students began to interpret lying and cheating as adult behaviors substantiated in particular situations. Students expressed particularly strong emotions in response to classrooms that were perceived as oppressive and as well as those classrooms which they saw as not valuing their emotions.

Power as a Positive Force in the Classroom: "I like her to just tell me. It's easier that way."

Three children felt that the ways their teacher enacted power, while sometimes an "annoying and mean," (Clementine) were also good. They felt that teachers (and parents) were ones allowed to use power whenever they saw fit. However, two of these three also contributed comments that contradicted this notion by saying that their teachers had, "too much" power and that they [the children] "weren't stupid."

"I hate being bullied by people except my teacher and my mother," said Stella. I inquired further during an individual interview:

> **Me:** So, you think it is okay for moms and teachers to be in charge. Tell me more.
> **Stella:** Yeah, they can because they are older. And…I mean, if they weren't then we wouldn't know what to do. We'd come to school and be here with nothing to do `cause we would just play and not learn things and that wouldn't be good or smarter.
> **Me:** I see what you are saying.

> **Stella:** Moms and teachers are the ones. Like they pick it and show us how to be. They have to be in charge. I know things but they are sometimes wrong and then the teacher yells at you and you can figure it out. Mom can yell and you get it better, more better.

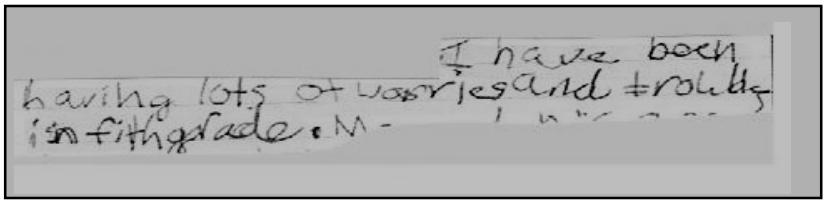
Stella felt it was allowed and often good for teachers to have power over students because children "wouldn't know how to be without them." For her, teachers showed the students what they needed to know to be successful and without them, they would not know how. Dixie agreed, "I feel excited mostly because I am ready to learn, ready to get to know my homework, and ready to study social studies for my tests. Teachers tell you what to know." The excitement Dixie cited revealed that she thought the power the teacher possessed helped her learn made her happy. Daniel also elaborated how he felt power could be positive:

> **Daniel:** Kids can't decide to help because kids don't listen to kids unless they are told to be equals or something, like respects for their thoughts. Then everyone can help everyone.
> **Me:** Okay, so you mean that teachers should be in charge?
> **Daniel:** Yeah, because…well…umm…They should have power because then they can fix things and know what's best. But teachers can give kids equals and then they can help but the teacher is still in charge. We need them. But if the teacher says like to give respects to others then the kids will. But it is the teacher that decides.
> **Me:** So, the teacher decides how she uses her power, either to tell kids how to be or to teach kids how to be.
> **Daniel:** Umm…Yeah…like that.

For Daniel, the teacher provided entrance into a discourse that he felt he did not know well. Although he stated that teachers needed power, he also said that they can use it in different ways, giving children power to help and agency in the classrooms, or that they could decide not to do that. It was the teacher's decision and he trusted her to make it.

In Summary. The children in this study felt they were being controlled by the teachers, told to act and be a certain way that did not allow them to express autonomy or

distinguish themselves as individuals. The exhibition of teacher control in such a way was a stark contrast to what they felt occurred in the fourth grade classrooms leading to an even more difficult transition.



The children felt fear about such power being wielded over them in ways they could not predict and had not experienced before. Like Lewin's classical experiment in 1939, the children who moved from a perceived democratic or permissive environment struggled to accommodate the rigid power of the new contexts and teachers.

In August the children in this study spoke of being able to tell the teacher anything. Yet, by November, the children said that there were many versions of truth and that certain circumstances dictated what the best course of action, whether to tell the truth or not, was. The students in fifth grade felt that telling the truth did not always end in positive outcomes. They perceived little power for themselves in the classroom and because they came from previous classrooms in which truth telling was admirable and often ended in less punishment, they were dumbfounded about why until about October when during a discussion, Martin said, "These teachers are like adults. They lie." In agreement, the children felt that telling the truth in different increments, for differing situations was what adults did.

Some found positive attributes of power such as knowing what to do in school and having someone to instruct them on the best ways to learn. Although they believed power was appropriate for a teacher to have and wield at will, they also felt that there were positive and negative ways to use it. In such ways, teachers gave the children the words to describe power and its uses. They also gave the students the ability to be critical of the ways it was enacted in their classrooms. They felt that teachers and other adults were the ones "with the knowledge who need to share it." (Daniel). Like Delpit (1988)

showed, these children were aware of who had the power and felt they needed explicit instruction as to how to gain some themselves.

Some of the children seemed to buy into the *figured* versions of the school that the teachers promoted. That is, because the teacher took control in ways the children had not experienced before, it took time for them to become accustomed. Thus, over time some of the students' stances towards the ways the teacher's utilized control, which was different than previous grade and teacher experiences, changed to be more in line with the fifth grade teachers' version of control.

Nostalgia: "100% Okay"

Rose's statement about pit bulls and mosquitoes which ended one of the focus group conversations is a good place to begin this section about how the prior year became nostalgic in the students memories, and additionally brought about feelings of melancholy and longing when they compared the past to their current classroom situations:

> **Rose:** Some of us are like pit bulls…and some are poodles and some are not dogs, like mosquitoes or something that no one likes, even the teacher. In your class, we knew that you liked mosquitoes too, so we couldn't be mean to anyone.

As their fifth grade year began, children found the fifth grade different in ways they did not like. Children, such as Rose, felt their current classrooms were not as accepting of them. As such, they began to recall their previous fourth grade year with rosy memories, memories that had become clouded by time leading to large, sweeping statements about the positive nature of their fourth grade experience. They reported remembering fourth grade as "perfect," "the best," and "awesomely cool all the time."

As Martin stated, "It was"100% okay. Everything was great. I know that now for sure." The children's thoughts about and feelings for fourth grade became increasingly rosy and often not entirely accurate. Perceptions such as Martin's were not rare, "I don't

have my favorite teacher there no more. She was the bomb and was always nice and fair," stated Aaron. Notions about fairness and equality, about perfection and "goodness" were common as the fifth grade year began. "In fourth grade, it was so much better. I wish we were still fourth grade. As Martin sat at a table with a tape recorder, chatted with friends, and worked in tandem on an art project across the room from me (I was working with students on individual interviews) he stated, "It was so much perfecter." To which Bette, Tzeitel, and Stella all conceded, "I know," and, "Yeah." "It was all fun. We did all fun things and thought fun ideas and learning was…you know, like fun…" (Stella). "Fourth grade was…like ya'll were never mean and were…well, perfect, and centers, and never bad stuff" (Daniel). During the focus group discussions, comments about how fourth grade was "so fun all the time," and "it made me think school was fun for once," were common. Memories of the children's time in fourth grade became overwhelmingly positive, no (not even one instance of) negativity. I attributed this transformation to the harsh feelings the students harbored toward their new classrooms during the transitory process, although it is possible that any memory of the past has a tendency to lose the negative and highlight the positive.

Thus, their perceptions and memories about the previous year were only positive in nature. They became aware of what they had had the previous year, and made comments about it being, "their favorite," mostly because of the teacher or the activities they remembered. "I wish I had you or Ms. Gypsy. I mean, can't Ms. Bloom be alittle bit like Ms. Gyspy?" wrote Bette. "I wish it was more like last year. Just alittle bit like Ms. Wilson's class so it would be nicer and more friendlier. I need the teacher to be more like last year when my teacher was perfect and goodest" (Tzeitel). Many children felt a sense of missing and longing for their teacher of the previous year. "I was really missing Miss Wilson today. I wish she was around more to hug me or something because I really enjoyed 4th grade with her she was the best teacher I ever knew and she really liked me," wrote Aaron. Bette began a short diatribe about this subject in a focus meeting:

> **Bette:** It was like so much better when it was last year.
> **Daniel:** I know. Like it was good and I didn't know it.

> **Rose:** Yeah. I think we should have been perfect compared to this year last year because Ms. Wilson deserved it.
> **Bette:** So, did Ms. Gypsy. Maybe if she was a 5th grade teacher, everyone in our old class would want her and then it wouldn't be fair.

The students felt that the teachers from last year would be coveted in the fifth grade, wanted by everyone. They looked through rose-colored glasses about last year, recalling the best practices, the fun parts, the loving places and forgetting or not reporting negative memories.

Notions of fourth grade being "fun" and activities being, "thoughting" [thoughtful] (Stella) and "interesting" (Aaron, Dixie, Frederica, Martin), particularly when comparing this year's activities to last year's, were evident in the data. Martin commented, "You have to do things all the time, but not in the same all the time like last year [you do things all the time but everything is the same thing, not like last year]. It is constant [this year], this and that, like the army. There's no time to think or learn. You just fill in the blanks and answer things. Not thoughting [requiring critical thinking or being thoughtful] like last year." Fourth grade was a place that was remembered as busy, but not in the ways that fifth grade turned out to be. And to him, fourth grade promoted thoughtful consumption of information while information in fifth grade seemed to exist only to fill in answer choices. Rose penned in her journal, "My teacher last year was so fun. She made activities everyday to learn, not other stupid things to fill in like worksheets or book answers. It was so much easier to learn and totally cool. Last year was so memerable with the fun activities, our friends, and our teachers. Last year was awesome because we had a cool teacher. Teachers make it." For Rose, teachers had influence to make or break the atmosphere and learning in a classroom, and the power to decide how activities and lessons were implemented. This teacher as environmental curator was so true that when she looked at her teacher and room in the fifth grade, she looked back on the fourth grade with fondness. Dixie stated, "My teacher last year was so fun with problems and hard things but very good for me. I came back here for her," speaking of her move in the middle of last year to Mexico, visiting her fourth grade class

again in February, and convincing her mother to move back to Austin because it was, "better for my learning and my thinking as a kid, an America one." Now at the start of the fifth grade, children saw even the assignments and lessons of the fourth grade as entirely pleasurable and all time in the classroom, enjoyable.

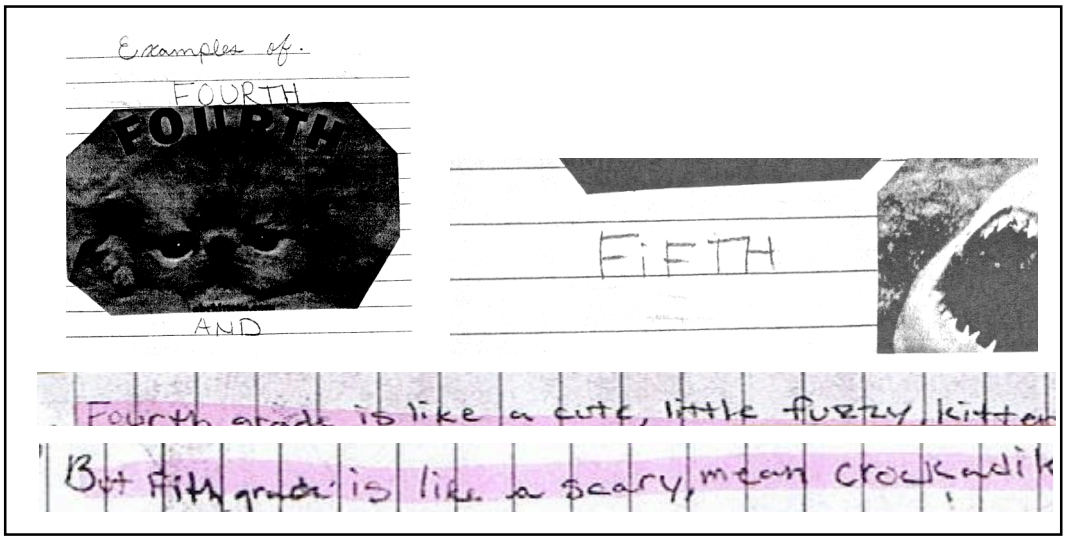
The students often characterized their fourth grade classrooms as "perfect," or "awesome" as a way of contrasting those experiences with their current ones. Although their perceptions should be viewed as just that, perceptions, the truth is most likely located between the extremely positive views of the fourth grade and their negative view of the fifth grade. Inherent in the task of talking about both their fifth grade and fourth grade experiences, students may have felt the need to exaggerate to make their feelings known and understood. In addition, because of my own role as a fourth grade teacher, it could be said that the students embellished for my benefit. It should also be stated that the students might, or might not, have been aware of their exaggeration or over-statement. However, all students did so, regardless of their previous fourth grade classroom or teacher.

Children also felt the need to let others' know how great they had it in the fourth grade. Rose responded to her peers saying, "We need to tell third graders or…but if you're going or currently in fourth grade, take advantage of it. Would ya'll think to tell them that?" Everyone chimed in, "YEEESSSS!" Sophie ended the session by stating how, "Everyone knows it now, but they didn't know it then," speaking to the idiom, "You never know what you have until it is gone." She and many of her peers felt that they did not take advantage of the classrooms they possessed last year, and only now were recognizing how good they had it. They spoke of times they were in the hallways, seeing the fourth grade area, and feeling like they, "want to be there," and, "makes me feel like I should run away and go back to fourth grade." In a side conversation between Martin and Daniel, "I loved fourth grade and sometimes I walk there to deliver a note or something and feel like I should walk in there but instead I go to a war zone. They are still having fun in there, even without Ms. Wilson." "Really?" "Yeah. I saw it going on

and felt sad." This conversation showed that the children believed fourth grade to be a time of fun and nostalgic joy.

Although their personal memories of fourth grade dictated the ways they made sense of their own experience, they needed to create new meaning as they saw the current fourth graders enjoying their time in the classrooms. As such, one of them insisted that it was fourth grade that was fun, and maybe not the fourth grade teachers. Either way, the children recalled their time in fourth grade with nostalgia, sharing only good memories, as if such memories were all they had of their time there.

Through acknowledging and distinguishing their fourth grade from their fifth grade experience, the children began to figure both experiences in different ways, increasingly marked from each other. Their previous experience in fourth grade caused them to figure their current experience in fifth grade in particular ways, such as traumatic or negative. Through sentiments such as, "Fourth grade [was] good, better, and the best" (Martin), students used discourse that set up comparisons between the grade levels. As Rose showed in her journal:



Although while a part of the fourth grade these students were certainly not always happy with the teacher or the classroom, upon student's reminiscence, it seemed so. Comments were always positive, and many included reference to wishing that their fourth grade

teachers were still their teachers (or to "know what they had when they had [them]" (Martin).

In Summary. The fourth grade became nostalgic, a time that was grand and good. It was a time they perceived as Daniel said, "All was well with the world." Perfection in the earlier grades, and particularly in fourth grade was truth to them. As students reflected back on their experiences, their memories and reflection became a way to figure their current classroom space. As students transitioned, they accessed their previous experiences and in doing so, both their prior and current situations came to exist for them in stark contrast to each other. As the time in fourth grade became noted as more rosy, so too did the fifth grade become noted as more negative. Only in contrast to each other did such memories exist. The children's time in the fourth grade was described as if looking through rose-colored glasses. Memories, vignettes of time passed were remembered as, "the best time of [their] life, like, ever" (Bette) and became a form of nostalgia as they viewed their current fifth grade situations.

Transcendent Ideas: Children and the World:
"Adults should listen to kids more. They know things that you might not know."

"Teachers are teachers. It means they teach someone or to help someone if they need help. To be listening and to know what they are thinking and then help them with what they know," said Daniel when asked what it meant to be a teacher. For Stella, "Teacher help…like giving help. Like teachers can be like mothers because they can be kind and generous and have a lot to share about things and how to do things or be certain things better. They listen and then helping kids, right?" And Dixie declared, "Teachers are people who listen to kids know them…knows what they know and what they don't and how to make them smarter." Children had sincere notions about teachers and the world. I used the theme label of *transcendent ideas* to refer to ideas that the children shared that seem to reflect larger views of their world, society, school, and teachers.

Notions about how the world should be, how humanity should act, and how learning should exist were included in this theme. Transcendent ideas referred to the deep *shoulds* of the world, the prayers and intimate hopes we, as humans, allow to permeate and transcend our realities.

I saw these ideas as socially constructed through the children's experiences of the world. For example, the children spoke of the importance of school and more specifically, reading for getting a job or going to college, "The most important thing to learn in school is reading because when you grow up and go to college or get a job you always got to read stuff you need to know before you start something new. How I came to that conclusion is that I really know because you Princibles, Teachers, Specials, Speech's always tell you to read to get more smarter," wrote Dixie in her journal. The teachings of those in her world led her to beliefs that were then reflected in her comment. As Gee (1999) might argue, these children were drawing on the cultural model available to them through family, community, and society. "The purpose of school is to get an edgucation, and to graduate in High School to be something you allways wanted to be in your whole life," wrote Mona, and Tzeitel wrote, "I'm a school kid. I like school a lot because when you grow up you maybe a cashier at H-E-B you had to learn math to be a cashier because there's a lot of math and reading for being a cashier." Many comments about the importance of reading and of school were noted by the children and seemed to echo the teachings of their parents, schools, and of society of school as vital in the future. They were aware of and able to talk about those thoughts in transcendent ways.

Students had many notions about school that included how it should be for them and for other children. One child, Martin, went on in an interview for nearly fifteen minutes about what he believed a school should be (to see transcript of entire example, see Appendix K) and how he would change it if he were in charge. Stella wrote about the psychological changes she would enforce in her school:

> If I was able to change anything at school, I would change the attitudes of people. I would make sure that they wouldn't call anyone 'fat head' or anything like that because it hurts. I would go into the classrooms and take notes, and if the teacher did bad, then I would give them two more chances and then give them off for a

> few days to learn better, new things. I wouldn't make them leave just learn from another teacher or someone so they could see how to be better. Everyone needs to get better.

And Rose spoke about how she wanted teachers to be learners just like students and how she saw her role as a student council member to change "things around here." She began:

> I want to be vice president at Radliff because I want to do stuff with school and make it better like have teachers get taught from other ones who do good. Like you could teach Ms. Beaches to be fun and learning at the same time. She can't do that yet but she could learn from you. And allow talking at lunch without counting down and no talking.

Stella and Rose's examples show the depth and understanding children had in their discourse about schooling and about teaching. "Teachers are open and they help you not to toss and turn in your life. It is bad if you are a bad teacher because you pass that on to your kids and they feel bad about school and there is a lot of school years," Sophie explained to me. Her ideal notions of school and teachers revolved around a "nice" teacher in contrast to a "bad" one, leading to ideas about learning.

The children expressed quite an assortment of transcendent thoughts about what learning is and how it should be. Sophie explained in an interview:

> **Sophie:** Learning should be fun because if learning is fun, the more people will learn, and the country will be better, and go to college and more things will happen in the world. That's how the whole world made itself. More people learn, and then it gets better. Except when it doesn't, like in war. Then people kill each other over being right. But when you kill someone, it is never right. Maybe if they learned to love and be gentle to another human being, then there wouldn't be war. Do they teach that in college?
> **Me:** I don't know. I don't know where I learned that.
> **Sophie:** Well, like now we are in war over oil, and oil is killing the planet, our Earth, so we shouldn't be fighting for it. We should take a consequence like smaller things that gas uses, not kill people over it. More things good than bad happen when people learn.

Sophie's example illustrates the intelligent and straightforward ways students could talk about learning. They spoke eloquently about their world, articulately paraphrasing their understandings about what was happening abroad and at home.

Students also spoke of learning as an action, describing how learning happens for individuals. Of course, their views of what learning felt like and acted as differed among the children. Martin described learning as, "My brain goes TIC. It's easy. Like a computer. There's a new file on it. Yep. It just pops up there and you can click and open it. Yeah, and then sometimes you fall asleep, and it's deleted or worse, it gets emptied in the trash and is gone forever. That's why teachers repeat. Because so you can have a copy. Back up for later if you slept." Rose spoke of learning, "You know you learned it because you feel it in your heart. Miss Wilson, come on it can't be described, you just know it like a puppy knows who will be trusting of it." C.C. wrote, "Different people read at different levels. Some are reading at the cat in the hat, while others are reading at harry potter 6 level. Not everyone can read at harry potter level yet. And some people might be past "cat in the hat" level. You have to be ready to learn at different levels, like reading them." The children continuously impressed me with how thought provoking and intelligently they spoke of learning and school. For these students, people were seen as different and as such, in need of different things. This idea was carried through to their notions about school and the need for individualizing instruction and using each other as resources. Because children felt that learning was different for everyone, schools should pay special heed to such ideas and what they potentially mean for children moving between spaces, from one space that met such a need, and another that might not.

Another interesting transcendent idea brought up separately by four children included those comparing animals or robots to children. As Clementine wrote about her confusion:

> Teachers and adults make kids do things just because they did them when they were little. It's silly because who cares if it is in cursive if you can read it. I mean, some adults don't write in cursive but just because it is supposed to be taught to us, even though there is no purpose, we have to learn it like a robot.

And Daniel wrote, “People should never, ever be evil to kids or animals because if they be evil then the kids won’t like them and the parents and no one will be happy and everyone is miserable. Kids grow up to be adults and it does it again.” He told me how he thought the world was in-cycle and, “The things taught to kids are then grown into adults,” and passed down. These children had experienced the teaching by adults of things the adults learned. While it might be true (as Daniel told me), that the things they are teaching are needed, powerful, and warranted, it can also be true that the adults are teaching things, “just because they got it taught to them” (Daniel). In which case, he posited that the adult should reconfigure their ideas about who these children are, what they need to know, and the changing times the children live in. These children posed that learning should be specific to needs, not to prewritten agendas.

Bette wrote, “A teacher sees lines and she’s judging us by animals. Like if we are good and if we aren’t we are bad. We aren’t animals. You can’t do that.” Children often noted feelings of being “animals,” moved like, “cattles,” or treated like, “pound dogs.” They felt that their treatment was not equal to adults, oftentimes, not nice, and seemingly not in ways they deserved. Martin told me, “It is mean to be mean to kids just because they are kids and don’t know somethings. They know other things that you might not know.” For him, as others, children had knowledge and were not valued for having it as often as they should be. Like Rose stated in a focus group, “I am smart and people tell me I am. I did commended on my TAKS, like, the best of the grade, but then Ms. Bloom doesn’t listen to me ever.” And Bette Replied, “Yeah, you are the smartest, but she doesn’t listen to nobody.” There was an underlying sense that age equaled knowledge from the point of the teacher, whereas for the children, knowing equaled knowledge.

Transcendent ideas were prevalent in conversations and journal texts, deep, personal, introspective notions about their world. To end, I would like to share Daniel’s take on school, society, and the world:

> **Daniel:** I wish I could be really, really smart and then I could not just talk to you but to the president of the United States and tell him how to be a good student and a good teacher. I have a lot to say, you know.
> **Me:** What do you have to say?

> **Daniel:** Like, I would say that kids are people and are smart people, not just babies. Babies can't talk or say things except cry but kids can so they should ask kids what they need and want. We want to be smart so we wouldn't just say to eat candy and slide and swing or not go to school. We mostly like school when it is interesting and we are learning things, especially hard things. Adults should listen to kids more. We have a lot to say about how the world is. Like about being a human person and living in a world that is nice. Like you said last year, kindness. And I would tell them that school is important for a lot of reasons, not just TAKS tests but because kids are important. I would say that kids need to eat when they are hungry not just at 10:45 when lunch is so they can learn better. And I would say that America is the best place to live because there is enough food, just not enough time to eat it.

Students such as Daniel saw the realities of the world and were able to discuss their understandings in adult-like ways. They had seemingly deep-rooted confusion and angst about the situations they saw, and had experienced.

In Summary. Students were acutely aware of their place in the world, how they came to see the world that way, and how reality sometimes skewed their ideal notions of how the world should be. Wishing, as Rose did, that one could, "go back and appreciate it [past experiences] more," showed how children are just like adults, trying to make it in a world seemingly hard and sometimes dark. Like Tzeitel who when asked if she liked her fifth grade class answered, "I'm trying to," we all want to be valued, treated fairly, and loved. So too did the children in this study. Why is it that children don't get, "Krispy Kreme donughts like [we] are special, and popsicles, and fun, and kidding around so [we] can feel good too?" Adults are able to get what they want, when they want it—to move throughout the world with power and agency for the lives they create. Children however are coerced, in many ways, to move throughout the world, especially in schools. We, adults, tell them when, how, and with who. However, these children argued that autonomy and self-insight are childlike too.

Transitions: Experience of, and Expressions about, Transition: "You have to move, that's how it works, you move year and year. (9-29)"

This section presents the experience of transition according to the children by first describing in general what they reported experiencing. The second section illustrates the overall transition for all of the focus students; the third describes strategies the children used to succeed in making the transition. In conclusion, I point to how the participants strategically attempted to create a place for themselves in the new figured world of their fifth grade classroom and gave advice about how to ease transition into a new classroom.

Transition According to Kids

Children are acutely aware of the ways in which moving to a different context with a different teacher can produce a better or worse situation for themselves. However, unlike adults who move between self-selected contexts, like the Alcoholics Anonymous of Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain (1998), children are not in positions to choose the contexts they inhabit. Therefore, listening to the ways and words that children use to describe their experiences is an important way to understand a child's quest for a seat in the classroom world.

The students spoke about their feelings about transition often telling the story starting with the very moment they found out which teacher they would have for the fifth grade school year. "Well, I had heard that the teacher I got was mean, and that sort of made me have scared feelings. And also that I was going to change from a fourth grade teacher to a fifth grade teacher because it is that the older you get after fourth grade, the meaner the teachers get, (9-29)" Martin explained to me. For students, transition began the moment they received their teacher assignment in August. At that time, they relied on their previous experiences and notions about the teachers to decide if they were afraid or excited about the prospects of the new grade level transition.

They spoke about the difficulties adapting to their new teachers, yet found it comforting when the lessons, classroom experience, or expectations were the same as, or

reminded them of fourth grade. "Today's first day was the best. Ms. Markowitz is just like you! She gave us a test on math, all the questions was easy is like what you teached us like decimals, multiply, and division. I'm so glad to be good at it, (8-15)" Daniel wrote on the first day of school. "I love doing reading because I read *Brige to Teribithia* before so I sound smart" (Bette, 8-2). And Frederica also journaled, "Social studies is fun because it is like last year! We are learning about America, and not tejas. Its good like last year with Ms. Bobbie (9-10)." When a lesson was familiar, the students felt comfortable and proud of who they were and of what they were bringing to the fifth grade class. When the fifth grade classrooms were perceived as similar to previous experiences or when the teachers provided tasks that the children were capable of doing because of earlier teaching, they felt confident and even proud of themselves. Their journals and comments were more positive.

However, their adaptation within the new grade took time. In October (10-29), I began a focus meeting by asking the children how they felt they were adapting to their new teacher and grade:

> **Sophie:** To get fully adapted in how everything is supposed to go and how we're supposed to do it takes me about after the break in December. I've just now stopped being mad for the first time now. I was mad for the first months because it was so horrible to me.
> **Stella:** It can take a long time if the teacher isn't like the old one, it takes longer. I liked fourth grade starting for a little bit right now.
> **Me:** Do you mean that you like it because you know it, and it is hard now because you are just learning about it?
> **Both:** Yeah. Uh huh.

Sophie shared that it was taking her awhile to assimilate the ways of the fifth grade, saying that she did not expect to do so until at least December to which Stella added that transition was easier if the new teacher was similar to the old one. Yet Rose would tell the group that she thought things were getting better as time went on. Still others felt it was going to take some time, that transition to new teachers and new grade levels was difficult. Martin felt that if the perception of the new context and teacher was "bad," then the transition was harder. Aaron believed that, like Martin, the worse the classroom is, the more he wanted to give up and just make it through to the next grade. His approach was

mentioned by others also as "it can't get worse!" (C.C., Martin, Sophie, and Stella, 10-29).

> **Rose:** It seem like it is getting better. I think we just needed to get adjusted.
> **Me:** So how long does it take for you to adapt to the new context?
> **Dixie:** About a week, no I don't think I am adapted yet.
> **Daniel:** 2 months
> **Martin:** 5 years if it is a bad teacher. If it is a good year, then it is maybe 4 weeks but if it is badder, then like 10 years.
> **Dixie:** Yeah, you need to learn about her a lot of time before it is good.
> **Aaron:** If it never gets good then you say "screw it" and just get the year over and go to middle school.
> **C.C.:** It is the biggest transition to fifth grade.
> **Martin:** It stinks a big ball of poopy dog turd especially if you had a good teacher and now a bad one.
> **All:** Laugh

The children stated that transition was not as easy nor as fast to occur as might have been expected. The children believed it took time to adjust and quite possibly, depending on the teacher and classroom, might never happen.

The situations/classrooms deemed "bad" by the children were seen as increasingly difficult if the teacher the year before was seen as "good." In a focus group discussion, the children stated (10-29):

> **Rose:** I think it's kinda hard because once you get used to how the way the teacher does things, and your friends that you have there, and how to work with them, and how people are, and where everything is and, then you move to another class. It's all different. And usually teachers don't want to take time to teach you everything that they did the first week of school when they just showed you, but that isn't using it. So unless it is the very first day or the second or third day, it is hard and stinky. They don't make you know, you have to figure it out. In the old class, you already know them, and you don't have to get used to them.
> **Clementine**: I think I agree with Rose. You get adapted to the lifestyle of the fourth grade class and then the fifth grade class days are like, "What are we doing?" So you like the old class better because it is comfortable and knowed…known by your body and mind.
> **Tzeitel:** It's like, 'What are we doing?'

> **Clementine:** You are with a teacher for 10 months, and you know them more, and you're attracted to them more than the new one. And when you move to a new one, you are confused because (1), you don't know half the people there, and (2), you barely know the new teacher.
> **Bette:** Moving into a new grade can be really hard for somebody and if the teacher is really rough then the students will be like, I don't know. Then they won't try hard and get bad on the test.

The children felt that moving to a new grade was difficult, especially if the classroom was dissimilar to their previous one, which of course, each classroom is. Sarah followed Bette's statement with an intense statement about transition, and specifically about how tough it can be if the teachers are vastly different than previous ones one has had:

> **Rose:** I think it is easier to adapt when the teacher is nice and comfortable to be with and she likes what you say and how you are, like she loves you for your head or something. When they don't like kids, it is harder to adapt because you feel like you don't want to be there and they don't want you there. Like, in your class, you liked all of us, even the bad ones. But I can tell my teacher doesn't like us all the same but she says she does. So, I mean, Clementine is sometimes right the teachers say that they are going to be all the same with us, but they aren't. Some of us are like pit bulls to them, and they are scared, and some are poodles and some are not dogs, like mosquitoes or something that no one likes, even the teacher. In your class, we knew that you liked mosquitoes too so we couldn't be mean to anyone (9-29).

Rose's statement exemplifies the intensity with which the children experienced transition. It speaks to the nature of their feelings when their new teacher did not seem to help them make the transition easy or similar to that of their previous year. Also implied was the nature of the teacher's class into which she was moving and her deep understanding of what it meant to be transitioning.

While Rose talked about the difficulties that arose because of the differences between her fourth grade and her new fifth grade classroom, Clementine told me, " It isn't hard if your class is kind of the same. Like, if they are both mean or quiet or fun. It would be harder to come from a class like yours to the fifth grade, I think (9-10)." When asked why she thought so, she replied, "Because it was more fun and moving around and

stuff and now they have to be like my class was last year so we are better at it because we were like this last year, kind of." Because the year before she had been in a class with similar behavioral expectations, Clementine believed that her transition was facilitated. However, for some of her friends, such as those who had been in my class (which she saw and heard daily because her classroom had shared an open half wall, they might have found the move more complicated. Daniel also reported on why he felt transition was difficult:

> Well, like before, you tend to stop crying with a certain teacher who shows you how…and your favorite class friends know what you are working on…your goals…so it works better. That's what I have to do this year too but it is…I mean, I try my strategies, but it is a new place and I don't know it as much, so I cry sometimes and get mad. Sometimes the teacher might not help…because she might not know your strategies and I might get scared because she doesn't know them (11-16).

Daniel presented his insecurity in using the strategies he had learned in previous years, with other teachers in new classrooms. He felt that during last year the other students were aware of what each person was working on and were thus able to help and understand, but he worried that this year, the same was not true. Moving between spaces, teachers, and peers, made it hard to know if previously learned strategies would work in the new classroom and with the new teacher. The misfit of previously taught and encouraged strategies used in one context to another context, made the transition feel tough for some children, such as Daniel. "I just want the nice ones in the class to know mine…like, know…but then not everyone because they…might laugh or something cause its not like last year" (Daniel, 9-29) and "Last year we helped and didn't laugh or discouragement, but this year its laughing at people (Martin, 11-16). These two boys believed that if the environment allowed children to "like, know" what each child was working on, and the environment did not "laugh or something" at them, then they would be more likely to use previously taught and successful strategies.

As a child coming from my classroom, Martin also believed the transition to be difficult for himself:

> It's hard because I was smart…wiggley too but…it's like I knew everything you did. And everything didn't change all the time. Like, alright, we have centers, and they are important for your education, and then no more centers. Then guided reading is important, and then no more. How come teachers say it is important and then the next one doesn't? It doesn't make sense. All we do is sit and do work which you said wasn't how you learn so why do I have to do it? It is maddening (9-29).

For him, struggling to figure out what the teacher meant "for a fact" and what was choice was difficult, moving from one place to another where what was important had differing consequences and meanings.

Several students wrote about expectations in their journals. "Learning the expectations of the teacher is hard," (Rose, 9-29), "The hardest thing is moving to another class and going to another class, understanding the teacher, the things the teacher do. Like going to have different rules in the class," (Tzeitel, 10-04) and "You have to sort of put more attention cause you don't know what thing you're going into and you don't know the strategies the teacher do" (Bette, 9-29). The children seemed definitely aware transition as a process they needed to figure out. In closing a focus meeting, Bette stated, "The older I get, the harder it is. Like 4th to 5th because you start to be knowing the teacher and like her and have a friend and know the stuff about the room and all, and you wonder if the new teacher will be meaner and differenter. When you are little, you don't know any better (10-18)." As she posed it, school transitions were increasingly tough as she moved from grade to grade simply because she was more aware of her place and lack of power and less able to change things.

Because this study initiated talk about transition, and the fifth grade teachers often spoke about the "preparation for middle school," perceptions about the middle school transition surfaced. Their teachers frequently used middle school readiness as a reason for specific study and behavior protocol. "She told us that when we get to middle school it's going to be even meaner and harder because, like, on all your papers you have to have

your last name because sometimes in middle school, they have, like, 100 Stellas, (11-16)" shared Stella. To which Sophie added:

> It will be more of a challenge. You gotta keep track of your classes, and you have different books in every class, and most of the time the teachers don't make themselves in your business, your life, because most teachers don't know what schedules you have. They don't know you, so like that's why this year the teachers are like that. They're getting us ready and I like that because…it would be bad to go there and it be worse than now and you not know it (11-16).

The children perceived one of their fifth grade teacher's roles to be preparing them for middle school. The fifth grade teachers in their interviews concurred. Six other students spoke about, "the need to get ready for middle school because middle school is so hard or quick" and that the reason is, as Bette and C.C. stated respectively, "That's why they have to be mean to us now. To teach us, (9-29)" and, "I guess fifth grade is pretty cool because it is like a bridge to middle school. You have to get ready, and that is what they do and why they do be meanish (10-05)."

Students were nervous about the transition to middle school, much like they were about the move to fifth grade. As Sophie wrote, "I don't wanna go!!! (10-29)" Statements such as Sophie's were uttered by many children who felt that if moving to fifth grade was bad, then the place called middle school that their current teachers spoke of, sounded worse! In their view, transition would happen eventually. At some point, they would, "get used to it." They had no choice.

In Summary. Students felt transitions were difficult, with increasing complexity if the new teacher and classroom were very different than their previous one. Children believed that adapting to a new context and a new teacher was complicated and could take months (or more) to happen but was eased if the teacher gave time and explicit instructions, including reminders, about expectations and ways of being successful in the classroom.

Transition for the Focus Students: "It will happen, just later or something. (10-29)"

Students in this study provided a unique view of what occurs over time as children attempt to negotiate a transition. Transition did not occur in a vacuum, but instead in real time. These focal students transitioned slowly, over time, into the new figured worlds of the fifth grade. Upon entering, they were fraught with turmoil, feeling unable to be comfortable and accepted in the new classroom. However, as time passed, the majority of children (all except for Sophie), were competent as fifth graders in their respective classroom worlds. They had "figured out" what to do and how to do it.

Their transition was like that of a concert. Each venue for which the artist plays is different, needing different monologues and audience interactions. Some parts remains similar such as the song list and the band members. However, how the set is positioned, the ways they engage in the situations might be vastly changes, some changes easy to spot and others harder to figure. For these children, over time they became more able to know what their audience (the teacher) needed to enjoy the concert, and they spent time refiguring how to give it to her. As they became better able to facilitate such changes in their identities, they became increasing less hostile, seemingly less negative, and better able to talk about their classrooms and teachers. In the beginning of the year, every student (except for Clementine) resisted and was angered by the new classrooms, and in specific by their teacher. Yet, over time, they demonstrated a resilient adaptive qualities. Thus, perceptions remained strong, yet some of the negativity became less available during both our focus meeting and their journal writing periods.

Transition Strategies: "Don't say go yet!"

Students employed many strategies in attempts to be successful in the transition to their new fifth grade classroom. These strategies did not always produce positive results. However, in looking at how these children responded to the transition, I called the ways and means the students used in attempts to make the move more fluid, *strategies*. These fell into three sub categories: a) those learned in previous/other classes/contexts, b) those

involved in emotional wellbeing, and c) those surrounding academic success and specific in nature to their usage in their fifth grade classroom. They will be revealed respectively.

Strategies used in previous/other classrooms/contexts. Strategies such as talking to find the answer to a problem are often reported by children, and these children were no different. They found, however, that these strategies often did not carry the same currency within their new contexts. Martin spoke about his use of an old strategy in his new classroom, "She says the next person who talks to the person they're fighting is going home or going to the office. But, like, not working it out or talking. Talking isn't the way to get help from each other. It's the way to get your mom called. (" Martin realized that unlike last year when his teacher (me) encouraged him to talk as the way to end a fight, this year, talking simply got him in trouble. I inquired further:

> **Me:** So, do you think you are able to use the strategies that your teachers taught you last year or other years to handle some of your problems?
> **Martin:** No.
> **Me:** Why not?
> **Martin:** Because the teachers don't let you talk and all of your handling strategies are based on talking…respecting each other but this is all about not getting in trouble and the best one wins…you know? I mean, you can't talk, so you cant work it out. So it doesn't work. You didn't teach us nothing else to do. I guess I could write a letter or something.

Martin felt that the strategies taught to him were not usable in his new classroom, although he wanted to use them. Mona posited in her journal, "I can visualize how to do it, like we did last year and in other years. So I do that," and Daniel said, "I ask my group like last year to see if they know it or can plan on knowing it. Like, I read it over and think of some clues or just thought about it in my mind. Duh, Miss Wilson." Here, both children shared how they had attempted to use strategies developed in previous years. When asked where Daniel had learned the strategies, he commented, "From my old teachers, like in fourth grade, and third, and second, and life." Students attempted to use strategies they had previously learned to transition into a seemingly similar context.

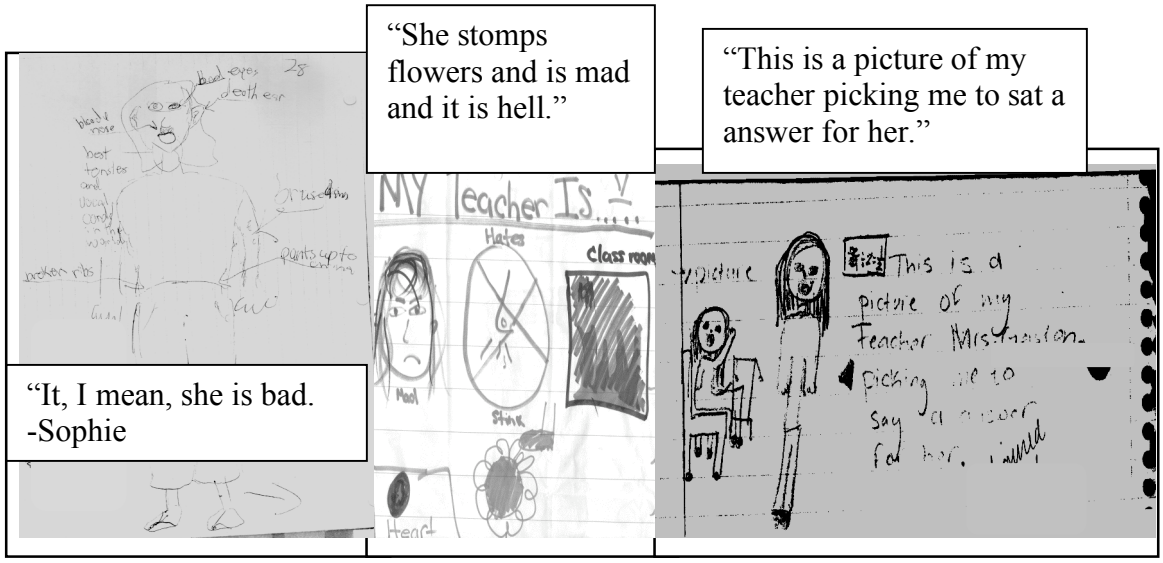
Another strategy was the use of reading one's writing as a form of sharing. Throughout the years of schooling, reading and writing had been fostered through stories, journals, and essays that attempted to showcase writing as the sharing of information, as a way to put ideas out in the world and to be received by others. As such, the students had come strategically to utilize reading and writing to aid in their transition. Bette described one of her reading strategies in an interview, "I just start to read and make faces in my book. You just use your books and when she sees your face being ugly or funny, you just say it was this character or that one and she cant get mad." In this example, the functions of reading are evident, and the strategy seemingly successful. Stella spoke in a focus group about her use of writing strategies from last year from which a small exposé ensued:

> **Stella:** I try to think about when we are planning out. How many pages I'm doing, how many paragraphs. Like everything we learned last year because she doesn't tell us those things. So, you use them to write things, like those are strategies, right?
> **Rose:** In school on papers I write if something big happens to get it out. There is this notebook…
> **Bette:** (interrupting Rose) Oh! Tell her about our book!
> **Rose:** Yeah, like there is this notebook we keep to write all the bad things down when we are mad. Not this one but a spiral one, and we pass it around. I write in that a lot.
> **Me:** Like, to each other?
> **All:** Yeah.
> **Me:** Like a slam book?
> **Stella:** Yeah to slam people, the teachers, people that make me mad. We write it down, and you get agreements.
> **Rose:** Like, mostly about the teachers. Like we might say Ms. Bloom is a meany but with badder words, or like what she did and then someone else will say how rotten that was and their own.
> **Me:** Wow. I think we had something like that when I was in school!
> **Daniel:** You are in school! (laughs ensue).

The children spoke about using writing (and the reading of each others' writing) as a strategy to let out anger and to share their experience.

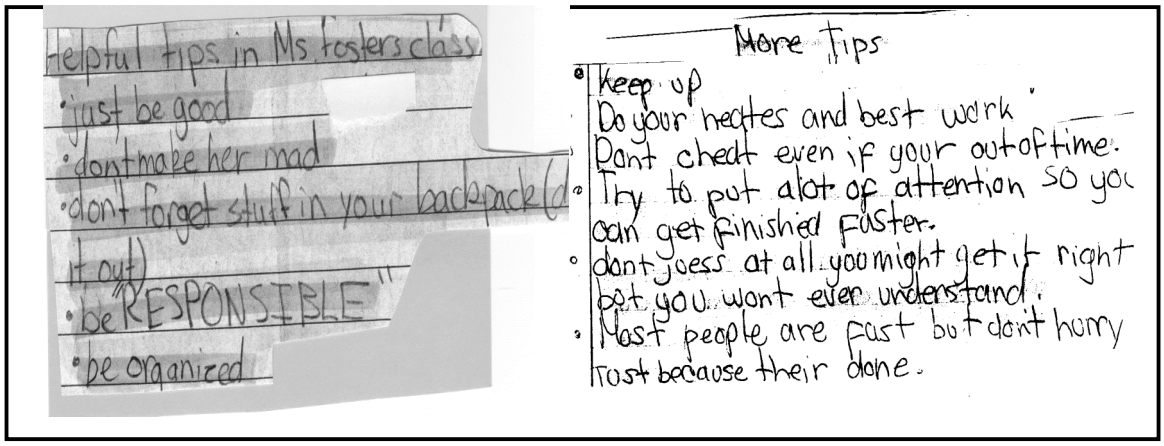
In addition to writing and reading, drawing was used as a similar strategy, to let off steam, share knowledge or understanding, and to convey a message. In their journals,

the children drew at some point during each of their entries. Three children did not draw in their own journals. Copious drawings scattered throughout the pages of most of the children, sometimes in addition to text, and at other times, in lieu of. " Sometimes I draw a picture of her, of how she should look, and I draw her because she has no hair." Often these drawings were graphic, showing things the children wanted to do to their teacher (like kicking her ribs) or perhaps had done (like "accidentally" stomping her foot). In addition, they expressed artistically wishful and saccharine pictures of their teachers, pets, and other things in their life for which they felt positive feelings. Artistic expression worked as a strategy to let out anger or frustration, share love or care.



Strategies for Academic Success

Students had definitive ideas and strategies for successful navigation of the fifth grade classroom. Like the above category, this one could also harbor past experiential knowledge and strategies. However, the examples below exercise the words "5th grade" to tie them to the current context. They used the word "tips" quite often to share their knowledge about successful transition. For example:



Both of the above are examples of the many tips students gave to an anonymous other perhaps entering 5th grade. As such, they represented the strategies the students used to be successful themselves. They promote ideas such as tutoring like Mona did, "To be a good student you can get in tutering because it make it easier on doing everything," and Jacqueline, "If I'm stuck on something I can do tutering and get it better." Stella also illuminated, "Sign up for tutring because it makes you not get in torubel for not knowing things." Tutoring acted as a strategy the students used to find success.

Another way the students strategically manifested their success was through paying attention and being involved in the lesson. "I'm almost always raised my hand to say the answer and always doing the things she says to do. That's what makes you good," stated Dixie. "It's easy because I'm really paying attention and then you get it better," said Bette. Children saw paying attention or answering questions correctly as ways they had to negotiate the new classroom.

Also included in this section are their notions of cheating, correctness, and respect for the teacher. These students saw cheating as a way to find success. Sophie wrote, "Don't be mad at others for cheating because it is what they have to do to not get yelled at. Don't tell them cause you get yelled at." Although seemingly negative, this example is one of six that noted cheating as a plausible strategy in the fifth grade. Martin said, "You turn it in late, like cheat, now but not in fourth [grade]. It is different. You have to learn when it is allowed." Answering questions posed by the teacher correctly, or not at all, was another strategy employed by the children. "Never say "I fogot!," wrote Bette,

"because it is bad to not know. Just fake it," and Martin said, "The teacher calls on you and each time, you have a better chance of getting it if you try than if you say you don't know or just sit there." Rose wrote in her journal a similar sentiment, "When you do the projects or are in class listening do it right, because they might not take a grade or ask questions, but you need to be ready if they do!" The children saw answering questions correctly as a paramount strategy for success. Lastly, they spoke of giving unending respect to the teacher as a strategy, noting statements such as, "Don't do any dis-respectful things," "Always be polite to the teacher," and, "Tell her she is in charge by your eyes or body even if she isn't so she thinks you respect her because she needs to think that."

Sundry additional strategies the children felt they used to navigate the waters of the fifth grade were: Having cheat sheets reminding them of pages of text they had already read so the teacher would not say, 'Blah, blah, blah, you did this already, you should know.' Get everything she says the first time, Don't be line leader so you don't have to be in charge and get in trouble, try your best, and 'be the smartest to avoid being the dumbest." When I inquired further about the use of academic strategies, I asked, "So, being successful in all the grades is similar? You just learn new ways to get good grades, and add those to the old ones," and was met with resistance.

> **Aaron:** They are different because the teachers are different. Like if they are strict or mean.
> **Me:** What's the difference between strict and mean?
> **Sophie:** Strict is caring and mean is mean. Mean is kinda like being strict but when you are strict you are different. You teach and take your time and show them. Being strict is taking time to show them, making sure they go above the line. The line of getting it. Being mean is forcing the person above the line.
> **Me:** So, teachers are different and you have to figure out what strategies to use depending on if they are strict or mean?
> **Aaron:** Yeah. You have to figure it out and they are not the same, no way. Nada.

Academic strategies enabling the successful navigation of fifth grade were numerous. Each one of the above mentioned strategies was seen and noted by the children as aiding and providing for academic success in the fifth grade.

Emotional Wellbeing Strategies

As Boekarts (2002) claimed, in classrooms, students vie for internal satisfaction and a sense of well-being. These children tried to balance the power and rules in the classroom by utilizing strategies to handle their emotional well-being. Two major themes arose in regards to the students' emotional wellbeing strategies, staying quiet and taking power in silent ways.

Staying silent in their fifth grade classrooms was a strategy that each child used at different times, each one being acutely aware of the strategy as a commanding indicator of success. Examples of this strategy ranged from the earlier use of making faces in a book, to Clementine's, "I kind of say things I want to say to her in her face in my mind, and then I let it go cause you, like, have to." Keeping to oneself was seen as an appropriate way not to get in trouble, "I don't ever talk, just do my work," said Tzeitel. This prompted me during my observations to see if Tzeitel ever spoke. True to her words, as well as to what four other students from her class acknowledged, she never spoke one word and was never called on. Ignoring (7 children), knowing what the teacher will say and therefore saying nothing (5 children), not making eye contact so the teacher would not see you (3 children), taking the blame to make the "yelling" stop quicker (1 child), doing things alone the best they can rather than accept help that might "turn bad" (3 children), recalling past teachers (3 children), and not asking questions (8 children) were additional strategies used to negotiate the landscape of fifth grade and lead to emotional well-being.

The children procured staying silent as a way to keep possible teacher wrath away. They felt insecure in asking questions, whether in a group or solitarily, and therefore became silent stakeholders in the classroom, managing their emotional well-being through keeping negative comments and emotions to themselves. Students stated:

> **Martin:** A lot of times I can't think of questions because I am, like, why should I ask questions since they aren't going to be answered. You are supposed to ask questions if you don't understand something, or it, but not now, only if you have an answer. But not just to ask a question to the teacher anymore. She is the one who asks. So, I am just quieter.

> **Clementine:** Yeah. I know. Sometimes I just don't say anything because it is trouble. Just stay quiet and it will pass for me in my head.
> **Martin:** Last year was different about questions because they got answered or we answered them, or the computer did. But the teacher didn't always ask them. Like, we made lists on KWL or in our logs. I keep trying to think of them, like, so many, like pages, and pages like last year but I can't. I've become muter.
> **Sophie:** This year you shut up because…they scream. They say stuff directly to you that makes your heart break. You feel like you want to kill yourself and them…like you are stupid. So…like…you don't say nothing.

Students saw being silent as a way to "stay out of trouble," (Martin) to "not get noticed" (Clementine), and to "keep her away" (Tzeitel, Sophie, Aaron). By silencing their dialogue in the classroom, they avoided possible negative repercussions.

The other kind of emotional well-being strategies that the students mentioned was through seizing power in silent ways, unknown ways. Taking feelings out on one's siblings or friends (2 children), officially inquiring about skipping a grade or changing classrooms (3 children), talking to friends (6 children), moving to a different desk or classroom location (2 children), writing about anger/"messing up the teacher" physically through journals, art, or physical text (such as Sophie, "This chip is Ms. Bloom [Chomps it harshly and lets crumbs hit the table](9 children), seeing a counselor (3 children), making noise when the teacher was not looking (4 children), were strategies the children used to assert a sense of personal control and power within the fifth grade classrooms. Another strategy employed by at least six children included faking assignments. "I'm faking my goals just to get it. How I do that is listen and get A's on my work. See, I know how. A kid's got to have some fun without the teacher knowing. I did that to you too only you knew," exclaimed Martin. The children saw "faking" as "getting done with the assignment through writing in answers just to have the blank filled in" and thought that, "the teachers don't really care they just want it done," as Sophie shared. Rose added:

> Yeah, like, you could change things and no one would care. We've only written two times, and it is only questions she wants us to answer but she really doesn't check them or care what we wrote. The first time I was careful to elaborate on myself because, like

> last year we got notes and hi's and things in the spaces. But then I got nothing, and she had us do it again but she never read it, so I wrote all the wrong things and it wasn't hard to know they were wrong if you read my favorite color before, not like CSI or something. It was like on the first page, I said I loved yellow and then I wrote that my favorite color was black because I was depressed. This teacher said nothing, so you can fake it, like, for completion.

For Rose, and others who were in agreement with her statement regarding their teachers reading of their texts, students could retain personal power in unseen ways, such as writing "wrong things" and "faking assignments." In wondering if this was always true, I asked if they engaged in such foolery with other teachers. "NO…I mean some teachers read. You have to know which ones don't and which assignments aren't for real" (Daniel). Notions of counterfeiting assignments as an underhanded way to assume some power was cited often by these students. Rose told me, "You have to be patient, Miss Wilson. You can't let things get to you," as I showed some reaction to the inauthenticity of the children in their fifth grade classrooms. "What about being who you are? Being what your teachers last year taught you, honest, and real?" I asked. Tzeitel answered, "Life is hard and you have to sacrifice things to get it." For children such as Tzeitel, transition came with sacrifices for success. Strategies must be amended, and identities managed and reconstructed.

Advice: "You have to know them…us."

Children posed much advice in their journals, talk, and texts about schooling and teachers. Most advice was given to teachers, mentioning how to have a positive, rewarding experience. Advice ventured included teaching ideas, knowing individuals in the classroom, the importance of the environment and a smile, fairness as an addressable issue, and sharing about next year before they move. As well however, students gave advice to adults such as the principal, and to other kids who might be entering school or their grade on how to negotiate the contexts they are entering.

Many lists, bulleted and numbered peppered the pages of the student's journals and the lists seemed merely added to in interviews and focus group meetings. Data in this sub category was direct. Because everything seemingly negative or troublesome could be seen as advice, I only coded direct advice that utilized words such as, "Teachers should…" So, an elicitation such as Bette's, "I hate it when the teacher doesn't give us recess," would be coded as a mismatch in needs but if it read such as hers did later, "The teacher should give kids recess. It is fair," it would be coded as advice to a teacher about the importance of fairness. Charts that attempt to illuminate the categories the children defined in their texts with purposely chosen examples follow. As Martin said, "It is based on a lot of years at this. I mean…I've been in school longer than anywhere else. I'm not a baby; I know what I'm talking about from experiences."

Advice to Teachers: "Can I just tell you some things?"

Table 2: Teaching and Fun: 12 comments

Name	Comment	Advice
Sophie	"You have to start over and over again. I'm always telling people what my favorite color is again and if they knew me, or wanted to know me, they would know because I told them in first and second and third and fourth. Only the teacher doesn't know and I could tell her if she asked me, but I get tired of writing books about me."	Activities at the beginning of the year are for the teachers, not the students and shouldn't be.
Martin	"If teachers don't know ways to be fun. They can ask teachers that do and every teacher could share and be better like that."	Teachers should utilize each other as resources to better their instruction.
C.C.	"I learn best with educational games and through experimentations. Educational games are fun and you can learn a lot from them. I know I have. Teachers should do them."	Do more kinesthetic activities.
Bette	"Like we need centers when you can go at your own pace and have different ways to make it harder or easier and then it is better for kids in special classes and for smarter ones. Teachers should all do centers."	Centers are a good way for children to learn and move at their own pace.

Stella	"Put all the stuff you like in different things, like centers and then guided reading and writing and then it would be together and we'd have many times to learn it in different ways and they could keep it up so if someone missed it, they could go back and get help. It should be fun and interesting like that."	Teachers should think of how they like to learn and have activities that promote learning in those fun and interesting ways.
Daniel	"Kids need to learn interesting and fun."	

Children felt that learning took place best, and they were the most engaged with, curricular materials and activities that required movement, and hands-on work with each other, and the objectives. The children felt that they "needed" interesting lessons that allowed for individualized and child-centered curriculum.

Table 3: Know the Children: 12 comments

Name	**Quote**	**Short Version**
Sophie	"Try to give the kids time and be nice to them. You have to give time and get to know them."	Get to know kids; Listening is respectful; Knowing the kids means listening.
Daniel	"Be nice to the kids and get to know them. It is respectful to them. Share your personality one-on-one. Be the listening kind of teacher. That is how it should be."	
Bette	"Well for starters she should be nice show she really cares and wants to help to know the kids. She should be patient and listen a lot."	
Rose	"1. Listen to our ideas. 2. Ask us what we need help on and listen to our answers…"	
Dixie	"You shoud listen to kids about their personlity and then share your personlity. Then everyone is important and not one person insted of other."	Share yourself making it about both the teacher and the student.
Tzeitel	"Love the kids like they were your kids. Then it will work out fine because you are being respected."	Treat others as you would like to be treated.

The children wanted to be known by the teachers, to feel as if their teachers knew whom they were and what they liked to do. This relationship building was posed as important advice for teachers. It was in growing such a relationship that a teacher earned respect

and would have a well-behaved classroom. They wanted, above all else, personalized attention from teachers.

Table 4: Environment: 11 comments

Name	Comment	Advice
Sophie	"Like this classroom (noting the room we are interview in) is colorful and interesting. Lots of things on the walls. It's happy to be here. Like our classroom is kinda boring and nothing on the walls to interest kids."	Items on the will denote a happy, vivacious classroom.
Rose	"In fourth grade you have lots of pictures hanging up. It is good to have that so they remember what they have done and feel proud of it."	Showcasing children's work allows for pride.
Dixie	"You need to feel welcome cause if you're not then you won't have a nice environment. Es muy importante por la classe es bueno y muchas papels…and like la maestra puts them up so you feel bien y quierres va a la escuela..because it is nice and good and you will love it there.	Hanging work and art is important because it makes the children want to come to class.
Mona	"When I get good rest, and eat breakfast in the morning and there is no distraction in the classroom, it is good. You can learn the best in that place."	Kids need food and rest to find the classroom a place to learn.
Tzeitel	"The hardest thing is that during the first day the teacher is like yelling at us and all that stuff and it is a bad feeling. It needs to be a good feeling on the first day."	The first day is an especially important time for good impressions by the teacher.

Children felt it was important that teachers take pride in the way their classroom looks. Having children's work on the walls and feeling that the room was inviting made the children feel wanted and excited about the school year. Like Maslow's Hierarchy, the children understood that for learning to occur, they needed food and sleep first and felt that teacher's should remember that, and help those in need.

Table 5: Smiling and Sweet Nothings: 11 comments

Name	Comment	Advice
Me: How do you know if a teacher is liking her job? Rose: They're happy. Sophie: The kids are smiling most of the time and the teacher is too. Bette: Yeah, the teachers are smiling too. Dixie: Yeah, smiling and they do fun things and enjoy it. You can tell. They smile and are happy.		Smiling is an indicator of job satisfaction for teachers and for kids.
Clementine	"You know when a teachers loves you when she always smiles and doesn't stop and yell a lot, just sometimes. She ecknowleges you with a smile all the time. If she doesn't smile, she doesn't like you or being a teacher or being in the school or at Radliff."	
Daniel	"The teacher is smiling and if they don't have their own kids or love the ones in their class she calls them, 'little dumplings' like Ms. Markowitz or 'peeps' like you or 'kiddoes' like Ms. Bobbie. It is meaning they love you and they wish they had their own."	Pet names and sweet, endearing comments align teachers with their students.
Rose	"I think they need to do compliments and things you can do better. They need to say nice things and make kids feel good."	

Table 6: Fairness: 9 comments

Name	Comment	Advice
Frederica	It isn't fair to ignore things for the other people. You can't just ignore things. They don't go away."	Ignoring things makes other students upset.
Clementine	"I think people who can control themselves and are good most of the time not be punished for what the other kids do. It isn't fair."	Group punishing is unfair and not merited.
Rose	"It isn't fair not to go to recess. We sit all day and it isn't fair not to let us go outside."	Recess is deserved for sitting quiet.
Bette	Necklaces are fun for some people but not for everyone like the slower ones or ones that don't get all the beads. They have to look at everyone having lots of beads and it feels bad. It might be mean and unnice."	Behavior and grade incentives that are visible are unfair.
Dixie	Other groups get to do like projects and all and they get to red really cool books and we're reading really, really,	Make sure activities and

	lame books and textbooks. It's not fair. Teachers need to think fair for the kids in activities and reading things.	book choices are enjoyable for all children.

Table 7: Share about Next Year: 4 comments

Name	Comment	Advice
C.C.	"Oooh and our fourth grade teachers should have taken us to see the 5th grade classes. They could have also taught us some things in science for 5th grade. They should have wondered around and see how we are suppose to act and tell us how they 5th grade teachers are and how they teach and then get us ready and not pretend it is all good."	Teachers should prepare their classes for the transition to the next grade.
Rose	"It would have been easier to get to fifth grade if I knew how different it really was that's why I was lucky by having an older sibling cause I would have been dark. That's all it would have took to prepare for fifth grade this summer."	Children want knowledge about the new class.

Table 8: For Adults' Ears: 5 comments

Name	Comment	Advice
Clementine	"Radliff would be better if we get to choose 2 people that we want in our class and the best student gets to have them in the class. That would be good."	Kids having power of choice is important.
C.C.	"School would be better if we had music in the cafitiria because it would be nice to have some music while eating exept something we all like. It would also be good if we all could take a school wide vote on what to eat each week. There the most popular item is chosen as the lunch each day."	
Dixie	"One thing I would like to do to make Radliff Elementary a better school is ask the principal if we could have feild trips more often. I mean we haven't gone any yet, and I don't think we are going to. We could learn more."	Field trips are good (and fun) ways for learning to occur.

Table 9: For Kids' Eyes Only: 9 comments

Names	Comment	Advice
Rose	"The first thing you need to know about fifth grade is it's like no other grade in elementry. And its hard. So everything your learning in school keep practicing during the summer because all you do in the first 9 weeks is reviewing."	Practice what you learn in school during the summer.
Martin	"Make a good first empreson when you go to 5th grade."	First impressions are important.
Daniel	"For upcoming 4th grades 5th grade is tough and if you want to be the best you can be you have to do your all or be the best get A's and B's and don't be nasty. Then you will do fine in 5th grade and other grades to.	Do your best in school and you will find success.

Children had much to say about their education and teachers. They felt they have knowledge and should have an ear to hear what they have to say. They spoke of their experience with teachers and their teaching practice in ways that promote fun and engagement as important factors for students. The notion of fun had a component of kinesthetic activity with many feeling that it was the, "way I learn best." The students felt this notion would be known by teachers if they were to listen and know their kids in ways that being in front of the classroom alone did not promote. Within that, loving them in wholesome and caring ways seemingly made the teacher known to the kids and the kids known to the teacher, whether illusion or real, knowing a child equated to love. The environment of the classroom having decoration and being filled with their work was also of great magnitude for them. They felt it was indicative of how their teacher felt towards them. In addition, they felt it crucial to note that teachers should make good first impressions too, for like them, impressions do make a difference. Smiling was a part of the way that teachers promoted and impressed the significance of those in her classroom, making them feel at home. Hugs, pats, and smiles were ways the teachers told the children they liked their jobs and wanted to be there. The attempt at fairness was another way the teachers showed concern and interest in the children. Children saw this as occurring in the lesson choices for all children being of the same interest level as well as

giving them time to run and play and listening to and acknowledging the issues. Sharing about next year was a paramount piece of advice that was given by students to teachers. Students felt that there was no one (other than the occasional sibling) that had the knowledge about the following year to share. As such, teachers should get their students ready by sharing it. Advice to adults and to other children about coming to school and specifically 5th grade focused on choice and practice. Advice was given freely and openly, with a seemingly heartfelt plea to teachers and a want for the next generation to know what they had experienced so it could be better. In this way, like Tzeitel said, "We can all be accepted for who we are. That's what that picture [the one below] is, Miss Wilson."

Section Three

Pre and Post Questionnaire Results

Student's Views of School and Its Correlates with Teachers

This section presents the descriptive statistics that resulted from the students' responses to the questionnaires given before school started (August) and a few months into the school year (November). Results are presented in four parts: (a) how students viewed school; (b) what emotions about school did children report; (c) what students reported feeling about their past and present teachers and the effect of these on their

school experiences; and (d) what subjects were seen by students as important relative to what teachers proclaimed as important.

How Students View School: School as Important

In this category, eight questions aimed to probe how the students felt towards and about school. No questions showed significant differences between August and November, possibly illustrating that children's views of school remained steadfast, with children remaining secure in the importance of school.

Overall, there was no significant difference between pre and post questionnaire results for any of the questions probing about the importance of school. However, three questions, showed interesting, noteworthy results. For Question 1, students responded whether they believed they could do more useful things than go to school. Of the 12 focal students, ten believed that no, there were no more useful things to do than go to school in the August questionnaire. Similarly, in November, seven still stated close the same answer. Three students had changed their minds by November, believing that now there were perhaps more useful things to do. It seems that as they began school, and were no longer on summer vacation, a few had become to wonder if perhaps time off was better. This result could be a result of boredom over the summer months or their new environment providing less than they felt was valuable. It seemed as though the trouble in fifth grade influenced the value they placed on the time off from school. Question 3 asked if the weekend was the best part of the week. Four students answered yes in the summer, and eight answered yes in November, potentially showing that as school started, time off became more sought after. For Question 5, eleven students answered no to, "Spending 12 years in school is a waste of time," remaining fairly consistent in the post survey, in which all twelve students answered no. These responses show that school was valued and that students understood its importance for a successful life later. Question 6 probed the importance of school and asked if students felt "going to school [was] very important. All twelve students, both in August and November, answered yes. Regardless of their classroom situation, the children recognized school as important and held that belief

constant from before school started into the new year. They later said that the summer was not the best time of the year. All of the above questions did not show significant differences in distribution of answers, ranging in chi-square values from 0 to 1.75 (see Table 10).

Table 10: Children Answering Yes: School as Important

	August	November	Total	Chi-square
1. Useful	2	5	7	0.833
2. Homework	10	8	18	0.089
3. Weekend	4	8	12	0.686
5. Waste	1	0	1	0.929
6. Important	12	12	24	0
7. Play	4	10	14	1.254
8. Interesting	0	2	2	1.750
19. Summer	6	10	16	0.438

[1] none of the x^2 values showed a significant difference in distribution of scores.

Emotional Feelings about School

In this category, seven questions measured what emotions students experienced while in school. Of those, five showed a significant difference in score distribution while two showed no significant difference. Based on questions that did show significant differences between August and November questionnaires, the data indicated that children prior to entering the fifth grade found going to school a happy experience, whereas when asked in November, the school journey was more fraught with negative emotion. Words indicating this included, "glad, happy, and YES!" in August, and "anger, loneliness, and furious" after a few months of school.

One question showed no significant difference. Question 15 probed the students' feeling of freedom in their classroom. During the August questionnaire, ten agreed they felt free and by November only three reported the same, possibly indicating that in their

previous classrooms there was a higher degree of freedom felt than during their current fifth grade classrooms. Although the difference between ten and three children answering yes would seem large, it was not statistically significant.

For Questions 4 and 9, students were asked if they felt happy on the way to, or while in, to school. Question 4 had twelve students choose yes on the August questionnaire and none indicating yes in November, a significant difference with x^2 of 8, $p< 0.01$, indicating that as they transitioned into the fifth grade, their feelings of happiness during their journeys to school had decreased for all of the students. Question 9 asked for agreement to the statement, "I think that children are mostly happy when in school." All students indicated that yes, they thought children were happy in school. Responses changed to none saying yes on the November survey, supporting the idea that students no longer felt happy this year, yet had memories of school that were more positive. Lastly, Question 13 asked the students to assess the statement, "School makes me feel bored most of the time." None of the students said yes to the statement in the August questionnaire whereas twelve said yes in November, with an x^2 of 8, $p<.01$, indicating that the students' disillusionment with their fifth grade experience was influencing the emotions they had in the classroom, turning an experience they remembered as, in the least, not boring (see Table 11).

Table 11: Children's Emotions in the Classroom

	August	November	Total	Chi-square
4. Happy on way	12	0	12	8
9. Happy there	12	0	12	8
11. Emotion felt most often	Glad (3), Happy (7), Good (1), YES! (1)	Boring (3), Angry (2), Lonely (2), Sad (6)		
13. Boredom	0	12	12	8
15. Freedom	10	3	13	1.963
16. Happy going to	12	2	14	3.869

Feelings About Teachers

In this category, five questions were aimed at describing how the students felt about their teachers. In August, before fifth grade had started, questions were about prior teachers including kindergarten through fourth grade. Questions after the start of school in November included the current 5th grade teachers. All questions showed significant differences in distributions, $x^2 > 3.84$, possibly illustrating children's changing views of their teachers. These statistics were supported by the qualitative data the children had produced.

Question 8 and 18 asked students if their teacher made school interesting or a fun place, respectively. For these questions, twelve students answered yes on the August questionnaire. On the November questionnaire, no students answered yes. The x^2 test of significance for both distributions was significant, x^2 of 8, $p < .01$, indicating that students found the beginning of the school year with their new teacher a difficult time, one in which the teacher was seemingly not engaging and learning was not fun. For Question 10, students were asked if teachers made students happy. In August, nine students answered yes, but by November, none said yes. The x^2 test of significance for this distribution was also significant, x^2 of 6.3, $p < .025$, indicating that the students felt less pleased and harmonious with the fifth grade teachers than they remembered feeling toward their previous teacher in other years. Similarly, in Question 17, the differences in distribution suggested that the feelings they had about their teacher influenced their views of the time they spent with their teacher negatively. Also suggested by their answers on the August questionnaire was that students felt differently about the time they spent with prior teachers compared to the fifth grade teachers (see Table 12).

Table 12: Children's Feelings About Teachers

	August	November	Total	Chi-square
8. Interesting place	12	0	12	8
10. Ts make happy	9	0	9	6.3
17. Like time w/ T	12	2	14	3.869
18. T makes fun	12	0	12	8
27. T likes me	12	2	14	3.869

[1] T is representative of the Teacher

Student's Thoughts about Subjects and School

Because one's thoughts about the subjects taught in school might affect the way one comes to interpret the experience, it seemed important to ask about subjects that the students thought important, which ones that they deemed were taught well, which they felt their teacher liked and had passed on a love for them. Below, frequencies indicate whether the students cared about the same subject in ways similar or dissimilar to the care that a teacher showed regarding a subject. These responses could include the time a teacher spent on a particular subject, the ways she talked about a specific subject, or the ways the curriculum was set up regarding a particular subject. I was particularly interested in the subject of writing. Because fourth grade includes a high stakes test in writing for the first (and last until 8th grade) and also because I was asking them often to write as a way to construct and share their lives with me, I was particularly interested in their own views of writing as well as in their views of their teachers' emphasis on writing as a way to see if there was a match or if writing was understood to be important. Because these children were in a high stakes state and subject attention can vary, it is not always true that writing would be emphasized or encouraged. As students made the transition into fifth grade where the high stakes tests changed to reading, science, and mathematics, I was interested in whether the students' feelings about writing and/or other subjects might change. Data indicated that feelings did not significantly change in tandem with the emphasis teachers placed, the autonomy they allowed, or the time they gave to individual subjects. Instead students knew and continued to feel that they liked or disliked certain subjects personally, and these likes and dislikes seemed to influence ratings.

Eight questions looked at different subjects as students saw them, with five showing no significant difference in distribution between August and November and two showing significant changes. One question asked the students to list which subject they thought was the most important in school.

Question 20 asked the students if during writing instruction they had a sense of freedom in their classrooms, specifically during writing time. Nine students marked no in

the summer, and ten did so in November. Students responded that they did not feel writing was a time of freedom, perhaps showing that writing in school was seen by these students as formulaic and teacher-goal driven. However, in Question 23, students were asked if they were able to share things about themselves when they wrote. For this question, twelve students in the August survey said yes while only four did so on the November survey. This result is indicative that students felt that the fifth grade classroom provided less opportunity to reveal who they were in their writing. Additionally, when asked if they felt they wrote a lot in school, four times as many students said they did write a lot in school in August than in November. Although not significant for this group, it would seem possible that teachers are changing the amounts of time spent on certain high stakes testing objectives based on the tests proposed for that grade level. Thus, in fourth grade, the high stakes assessment is in writing, perhaps leading teachers to emphasize writing as a key subject area and increased time spent. However, writing is not tested in fifth grade and perhaps as such, is given less time. Also noteworthy is that students felt they had the chance to share more about themselves when they had increased opportunity to write.

Two questions showed significant differences in distribution about children's thoughts about school and subjects. Question 25 asked the students if they felt their teacher liked writing. In the summer, based on the students' prior teachers, and most likely their fourth grade experience, all twelve students said yes, their teacher did like writing. However, in November, only two students said yes. This distribution is significant, x^2 of 3.869 and $p< 0.05$. It is possible that the fourth grade teachers spent more time on writing because they found more joy in the teaching of writing than those fifth grade teachers. Also significant, Question 26 asked students if they felt they knew a lot about writing. All twelve felt they did in the summer, whereas only two did so in the fall. This distribution was significant, with a x^2 of 3.869, $p< 0.05$, and suggested that during the time their teacher had been spending time on writing, students felt more confident in their writing abilities while later in grade five, perhaps because of less time

spent on the subject of writing, more critical feedback, or less opportunity to showcase writing for public review, the children became less secure in their ability as writers.

Lastly, Question 12 asked students to tell what they felt was the most important subject in school. For the summer questionnaire, four students wrote math in the allowed blanks, seven chose reading and/or writing, and one science. For the November questionnaire, six chose math, three reading and/or writing, and three science. This suggested that depending on the time spent in classrooms on certain subjects, or perhaps the tests imposed in the particular grade level, the importance of a subject changes in line with the expectations and gravitations of that grade level and the tests imposed therein (see Table 13).

Table 13: Thoughts About Subjects and School

	August	November	Total	Chi-square
12. Most important subject	Math (4), Reading/Writing (7), Science (1)	Math (6), Reading/Writing (3), Science (3)	12	X
20. W = freedom	9	10	19	0.020
21. W is hard	1	2	3	0.268
22. Good writer	7	8	15	0.030
23. W = sharing	12	4	16	1.867
24. Write a lot	12	3	15	2.7
25. T likes W	12	2	14	3.869
26. Know a lot @ W	12	2	14	3.869

[1] W represents Writing and T represents Teacher

Chi-square is used most frequently to test the significance of the distribution of individuals across different choices or times. Chi-square was a proper choice because of the low number of respondents and expected frequencies (but above the minimum of 5). However, the significance for chi-square analysis simply represents that individuals are distributed so differently across the independent variable that such a distribution could not be expected by chance. Chi-squares do not take into consideration the degree of endorsing a choice. As with any statistical test, statistical significance does not ensure substantive significance. Because this study had only 12 focal students, significance

means only that the pattern of distribution and relationship between variables is found in the data from the sample of focal students and is only generalizable to similar students, perhaps only the population of students at Radliff Elementary. Because the qualitative data already reported pointed to similar findings, these significance tests gain some trustworthiness and act to triangulate the other findings.

Chapter Five

Theoretical Model

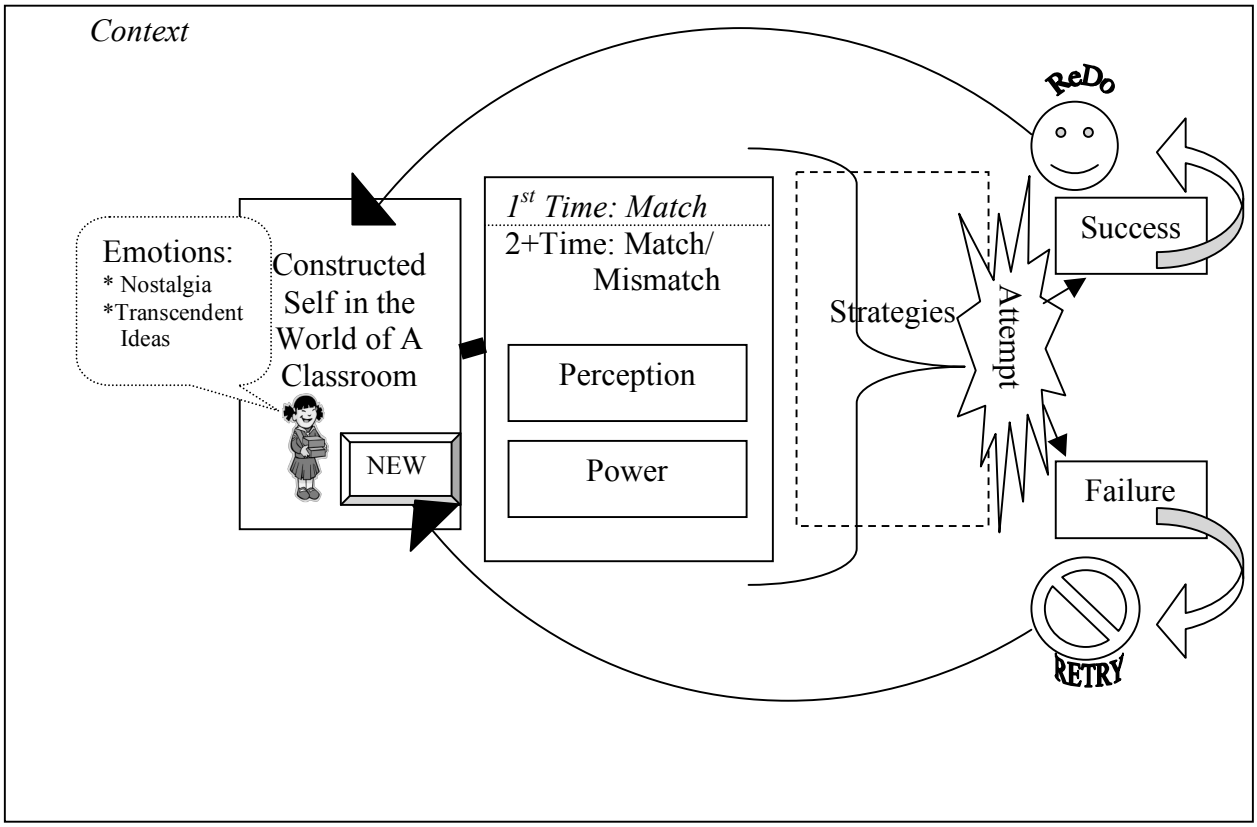
As I constructed and illustrated the themes in this study, I began to see the dynamic nature of the process the children underwent as they made the transition into the fifth grade and created new identities for themselves in their new classrooms. Reflecting on how the themes worked together, I began the work of creating a more cohesive view of transition for the children. I wanted to portray how they used what they knew to be true of them, what prior experiences and knowledge they had, in their new classrooms. Just how did students use their fourth grade knowledge, their socially-constructed ideas, their perceptions and notions about power, to make assumptions and attempt to become a part of the new classroom environment? After modeling the relationships in many versions, and seeking help from the students in understanding how they saw their journey, I created a model that captured the dynamic nature of transition according to children and how newcomers to a novel environment become successful participants in a community.

This chapter is organized into two sections. In the first section, I present the model of *Transition According to Children* and a brief interpretation of the model. In the second section, I illustrate how the model represented the different ways individual students' negotiations of a transitional space reflected their particular response to the context. The model was meant to illuminate the transition that children experienced based on data from interviews with the students, parents, and teachers, focus group meeting transcripts, student-kept journals as well as my observation notes. Three students' responses to the transition are examined in detail using the model as a framework for their experiences.

The Model

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined grounded *theory* as the denotation of a "set of well-developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon" (p. 22). Throughout the analysis of data, I focused on identifying themes that described students' experiences at school and in particular, of their interactions with teachers. An initial model of participants' experiences at school was constructed using the themes identified through the data from the 12 focal students. The working model was constantly compared with the student data representing their entry and continuation in their 5th grade classroom. The themes and categories derived from the original data informed the final working model. I found I had to change the model multiple times through the examination, member checking, and peer debriefing process before the central phenomenon and ultimate model emerged. I termed the model *School Transition According to Children*. It is important to note that, like much of the narrative text presented in Chapter 4, the model highlights transition according to children. It is their ideas and experiences that informed the model's creation, and therefore, it is a child-centered, child-journeyed dynamic view of transition that it represents.

Figure 5.1: **Model of School Transition According to Children**



Interpretation of the Model

As displayed in Figure 5.1, the central phenomenon concerns a dynamic interaction between the context (noted as the large rectangle within which the model is contained) and the construction of the self in the world of the classroom (noted in the box to the right of the small child). This phenomenon is called *transition*. Through the interaction between the self and a context (namely the classroom) during a transition, students create and recreate their notions of themselves (their identities) and their learning environment in attempts to be successful at negotiating the context. Students enter any context with prior knowledge, ideas, and emotions that write "scripts" for who they are, how they are, and what they understand. These scripts act as lenses through

which individuals act and understand in each situation. The emotions they had surrounding the experiences from prior contexts and instances feed their self-perceptions and give meaning to the world around them. In this study, each time children interacted in a context, they were influenced by their previous knowledge and experiences such that all actions were in reaction to prior learning.

In the case of a grade level graduation, students enter the new classroom and meet the new teacher with hopes of understanding what is needed to become a successful, positive participant in the new space. Learners do this through two categories of context-understandings that are used to identify within the classroom what will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome. Although outcomes are personal and multiple, it can be said that all students have the goal of being a legitimate, successful student in the new classroom. Connected to the construction of self in the world, are categories of power and perception. Perceptions are those feelings and experiences one has about "how things are." Students have perceptions about power and potential matches or mismatches as well as other thoughts and understandings about schooling practices. A question such as, "What does this mean to/for me?" is indicative of the larger match/mismatch category. The power category is marked by internal questions the student might ask such as, "Who has the power here and who wants the power?" While the perception category is marked by possible questions such as, "How do I see the experience, what do I think about it, and how do I feel about what's going on?" The category of mismatch and match creates a larger box, subsuming within it power and reported perceptions. *Match/Mismatch* are used here to describe the ways that students either aligned or did not align with the beliefs or rules of the teacher. At the center of the model, match/mismatch, with power and perception embedded within show that the children will locate a match/mismatch first, and only then perceive or locate power. This is why match/mismatch contains the sub-categories or power and perception. This box is attached to both the construction of self and strategies the students use to negotiate the new classroom. As the children engage in a grade level and teacher change, they approach the new context with prior classroom knowledge and experience which showcases the relational categories of power and

perception, encased in the understandings of mismatch/match, from which they create or decide on a strategy to implement in the new learning environment. The student hopes the strategy will allow the goal to be reached in a positive way gaining them increased access and awareness in he community. The dotted line surrounding *strategies* seeks to illustrate the direct data involving the strategic processing that had gone on. Such data was only inferred it from subsequent actions or *attempts*.

Having explained the elements in the figure, I can now illustrate the model's utility for understanding transition and providing a more coherent storyline. From the "constructed self*"* rectangle, a deep, bold line connects to the mismatch/math box. This bold line represents the entering of a new situation or experience in the classroom. Initially, a child attempts to use what she knows from previous grades, assuming a *match* between the new and prior knowledge to go about a task. Because anyone can only act on what they know, the children engage in the task as if the teacher/classroom environment will *match* their knowledge. At this point, they know no other way. Only after a failed attempt will the child reenter this process and assign a mismatch status to the strategy previously employed thereby illuminating a new strategy to attempt. The match and match/mismatch process leads the child to ask questions such as, "What do I know about this situation, context, or experience, and how does it match or mismatch with what I previously have experienced or what I previously know?" This category is divided by a dotted line to show that the first time children enter a situation, they will assume a match with what they already know, much like a toddler will assume a furry animal is a dog until she meets a cat for the first time. It is only after a failed attempt in the classroom that there is motivation to repeat the attempt with new instanced strategies. Without the need for a new strategy because of an earlier success, children repeat the strategy because the old strategy led to a desired outcome. If old strategies work to achieve a positive outcome, the strategy stays in the repertoire and will be used again before any new strategy is attempted. The match and mismatch process subsumes the power and perception processes because one's prior knowledge immediately assigns a match or mismatch status to an experience as one attempts to figure out what is occurring and how

to do it "right." Then, through these figurings, one's perceptions of the situation and positionality (power) emerge and act as lenses through which the dynamic and complex nature of the match or mismatch are qualified and extended.

When a child finds a strategy that works in the new classroom, she will use it again, or until it becomes no longer effective. Trouble in transitioning, or a truly unsuccessful transition consists of, and results from, failure during multiple, repeated attempts to achieve goals. The inability to "figure" out how the classroom world works, resulting in continual negative reactions and personally critical misunderstandings, is indicative of unsuccessful transition. A successful transition, by contrast, is defined as reaching full member status within the classroom community through the use of strategies that work to achieve meaningful goals. These strategies are accommodated for any new instances as well as are inclusive of the strategies that are deemed as personally satisfactory for membership by both the "authorities," the teacher as well as other neophyte members. It does not however indicate socially sanctioned or accepted strategies.

For example, say a child assumes she can go to the bathroom any time she needs, because this is how it worked in a previous grade or with a previous teacher and she attempts this same action in her new classroom. When she is met with a negative consequence for this action the new context (such as when a teacher says it is not a good time to go), the student will begin the recognition of strategies, attempting to construct what her knowledge was before, what strategies she used, and how to achieve her goal of going to the bathroom. This example shows the active construction of new knowledge/experience that is domain specific, creating inlets for new identities to reconstruct in ways more in line with the needs presented by the context. These strategies are informed by the match/mismatch that occurred, as well as categories of power and perception. Entering the category of match/mismatch again with her new gained knowledge and experience, she will identify a mismatch with previous experience or knowledge and actively decide how to be successful in the next situation.

The movement from processes of understanding, namely match and mismatch subordinate to power and perception, to strategies and an attempt is illustrated in the model as a bracket in order to portray the action oriented nature of an internal understanding and the integration of multiple strategies into one that seemed usable at the moment, one that could then be acted upon. The category of match/mismatch, (containing within it, power and perception), are integrated to inform a strategy or strategies that could be used in the situation at hand. Although the match and mismatch category inclusive of power and perception are seemingly depicted in separate boxes, they nonetheless coalesce with memories/schemas which enable action at the needed time. They were the lenses from which the children acted. The bracket thus opens from the left and tapers to the action portion of the strategies to portray the compiling and synthesizing of perceptions and power understanding into action. The notion of *strategy* here is internal to the child and, for the most part, could only be inferred by subsequent action and discourse.

Strategies are the ways the children brainstormed and write/rewrite their knowledge such that they can construct an action in line with their particular goal. They are internal and psychological in nature. Thus, although not outwardly visible, the later physical action/attempt illustrates the internal thoughts and alignment. The action/attempt burst is the physical manifestation of the internal strategies used to elicit and choose an action, which I have depicted as an *attempt*. When the child makes an attempt, thereby integrating her old understandings and experiences with those in the transitory context or new experience, she is met with external validation or with a negative consequence in response to the strategy. From this result, the child judges the strategy as effective (a *success*), or ineffective (a *failure*). If the child perceives the encounter as a success, she rewrites/reconstructs the situation to inclusive of the utilized strategy as a successful/good way to negotiate the learning environment. She then creates hypotheses about the space, time, experience etc. and adds those indicators to her strategy repertoire so that those understandings can be reused and re-elicited during a later or repeated attempt. Thus, the strategy is labeled as a success and be reused and reenacted later,

written into the child's schema when and how its use was successful. If, on the other hand, the strategy is met with what is interpreted as negative feedback, it was termed a failure, the student will return to the beginning of the model and reconstruct herself (and the strategy) in the world such that perhaps next time it would be effective. The child rewrites the attempt as unsuccessful, sees the strategy as unproductive in this context, and moves to try again searching for a successful strategy. At decision time, the child again moves through the model recursively until she can forge a new strategy that is deemed successful. From either the failure or the success, the students create new constructions of themselves in the world. This novel composition of self, including the new understandings and information, become a part of their world knowledge and thus, their selves, while also becoming a basis for all future thoughts, propositions, and actions. The model serves as a marker for movement.

Section Two:
Those who are the children

This dissertation is built on the idea that children are extraordinary people, that they know their own experiences, and have interesting insights to share about their schooling. Yet, as Sophie will tell you, when children talk, adults do not always listen. Children's words informed my study and the above described model and acted as its primary foundation.

In this section, I describe the experiences of three children, in their words, through their experience of transition into the fifth grade. Each portrait of an individual student has three main foci: the transition to the new grade as experienced by the student including her perceptions of the environment and teacher at school and emotional responses to the new context, parental views of the transition, and the student's thoughts about her place in the classroom and world. The case studies present the transition stories of three distinctive people, Clementine, Martin, and Sophie whom were chosen

specifically for closer analysis because they showed particularly interesting journeys into the fifth grade world of school. Clementine seemed to move seamlessly, Martin with some effort but eventually conquering the requisite requirements, and lastly, Sophie, who in the spring of the fifth grade was still struggling to transition with secure footing into the new world. These students' stories are shared, with one caveat: Although I am the author of this text, my attempt is to tell these children's stories as closely to how they authored themselves, their identities in my two year relationship with them, their lives. I, as much as possible, use their words, and keeping in mind that I was ultimately responsible for recognizing their stories in my own words.

Clementine

If only all students were like Clementine and understood the problems teachers face as well Clementine does, I am convinced teachers would have a classroom of quiet, well-behaved, and hard-working pupils. Although I am inclined to ask, as I did in my observation journal, "I wonder if Clementine ever wants to scream, to jump out of her quiet exterior and be annoying and loud. Is it my need for noise or is she quieted by something internal or external?" Even as I learned about her over the semester, I wondered if she was authentic with herself, and if so, what a wonderful gift she has for succeeding in our American school system.

Clementine's journey to the fifth grade came easily. She seemed to walk across the hall, down a corridor, and enter the room, ready and enthusiastic. Although perhaps not as simple as mere physical movement, her transition was smooth and seemingly not complicated by inappropriate expectations to mold into another "self" conducive for success because she expected to be who the teacher wanted her to be and expressed no

external problems or hesitations in the casting of herself as the teacher's expectations and beliefs.

She shared in the summer interview, "I will like my teacher; I always do." Through her journal and in her interviews, she continually asserted her power in making decisions about her experiences. She felt that her beliefs framed how her experiences occurred. As one example, I watched on her second day of school as the teacher called for all girls to get up and get in line. She did not talk to a soul and pushed in two other students' chairs along her way. After the teacher left the line to get her own lunch meal, Clementine still said nothing, even as the other students broke the silence. She received a compliment, as she sat not talking during lunch. Even during the first two days, Clementine knew that not talking would provide her success at being a "good" child in the eyes of the teachers. She was successful at her attempts.

Clementine also made allowances for her teacher saying, for example, "I mean, she [the teacher] will do the best she can," and, "My teacher tells us she will be fair, so I believe her. Teachers don't lie." Statements such as these indicate how Clementine felt she understood the teachers to do what was in her best interest. She trusted them and believed they were working at their optimum. This ability to mold and conform to the teacher's needs, allowed her to be sympathetic to the plight of the teacher, giving the teacher allowances for possible negative experiences. Even before meeting her new classroom, she had made decisions about her beliefs. She believed the teacher would do her best and would treat everyone equally. She told me, "I like strict teachers because you get a lot of work done. You get to not bother with the bad kids and keep moving. It is quiet and you can think. Ms. Bloom is like that and so is Ms. Beaches. I hope I get one of them." The stricter the classroom, the more Clementine felt she would enjoy the atmosphere as she knew how to negotiate it, to be a part of it in a positive way.

As it turned out, she did become one of those teachers' students and her transition moved quietly and more easily than any other focal student. Her strategies for transition included notions such as deciding beforehand that she would align herself with the teacher, "no matter what," and "working hard at home on homework so the teacher would

like her." She felt it important that she do her best so the teacher would be impressed with her diligence and perseverance. She stated, "I practice at home with my dad on my times tables and everything so I come in and am gooder at it. I have to. I might not be the smartest, but I am bright and hard-working. That's what teachers say about me." She had assimilated previous teachers' testimonies about her and assumed them to be true, referring to herself in the same terms. Thus, she was more easily a part of the teacher's classroom. A room tightly controlled by the teacher, such as the room Ms. Beaches provided her, would be a room in which she fit in nicely, assimilating into a community she adored even before she met the other members with whom she would share space.

Clementine knew herself well. She told me, "I kind of say stuff that I want to say to her in her face in my mind. And then I let it go. Cause I get mad sometimes too. I'm not always perfect, so I have to do something but not out loud cause you, you know…get in trouble." She knew how to work within the system, knowing what she was permitted to do, to say, and how to act. This ability to surmise the teacher's needs and handle any issue she had through "appropriate ways" enabled her to move between and amongst classrooms more easily than some of the other children. She stated she often felt "on stage" because the teacher called on her to be a model for the class and she felt it her duty to provide a perfect example. She also told me, "It's okay though because I can do it [what the teacher says]. I can be the perfect student." Although perhaps a brief view of internal strife, she populated focus meetings with explosions of, "I don't understand what everyone's problem is." She wondered constantly why the other students couldn't just change, just accept how it was and move on.

Her dad stated in the summer interview, "She works hard but is a perfectionist. Sometimes she just can't get it right but she doesn't let herself get it wrong. Incredible pressure for a little girl. I wonder if it will get worse. I don't think it helps her all the time. But I am proud of her." The perfection that even I saw and felt confident in proposing was perfection with a price. She was adored by the teacher yet had few friends. "I have a best friend but not many friends-like with an s." Others saw her as someone who, "sucks up sometimes," and "is a teacher's pet." These labels she too felt. "I think I

am the favorite sometimes. I mean, she likes other kids, but I am good mostly of the time," Clementine told me. She knew she was perceived as someone the other kids shunned, a brown-noser. And yet, it worked for her as a student. She felt certain that it was better to do well in school and not have friends than not do well and have many friends. Clementine spoke through her lens as a student with me, often showcasing herself as a student who refuses to let on that she even questions the authority put in front of her. Although perhaps she struggles internally, she would not let down her "good students conform identity, even with me, much less the focus group.

The transition to fifth grade for Clementine began within a world where she perceived herself as a participant already. She successfully navigated and embraced this identity and understood the control she asserted. She knew the rules of the world in which she had been a participant for five years. Regardless of the actual physical space, she could position the teacher, and thus position herself (Holland, 1998). She knew how to be a constructive part of the community as well as how to facilitate her learning and self-growth academically. She worked hard and felt that it would take her where she needed to go. She understood how to work the system such that she would be seen as "good" and "hard-working." She wanted to be an "advanced student" and felt agency in the manufacture of that dream. For example, she found strategies that worked and were successful. I wrote in my journal, "Clementine sits staring at the teacher, never turning away. She shakes her head attentively. She writes notes carefully. Every time I'm in here, she is perfect!" When I asked her about her experience in Ms. Bloom's class she said, "I like it. It is quiet and reflective. I think it is the best class for me yet. It is hard and sometimes she is mean but only to teach you things." The issues that other children experienced with Ms. Bloom were, for Clementine, the same aspects she liked that made her secure in her learning. Additionally, Clementine noted, "You just have to listen and do what she says. I mean, if she says to ask permission, you ask!" As a result of her posits about teachers and her teacher in specific, it mattered not what rules were enforced or how the teacher manifested the community. She would be successful in the classroom. Clementine would transition outwardly easily and acclimate to the new situation as

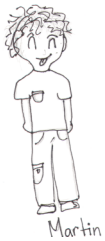
merited. Each time she raised her hand, it was to her quiet and calm, achievement of success as identified by being called on and writing in cursive writing easily and with readability, receiving positive comment from her teacher. As such, Clementine moved into the classroom of Ms. Bloom with relative ease, knowing and decisively believing the classroom was set up for her to provide just what she could, good behavior and rule following. Clementine had learned a set of values and ways of being in the world, which were translated into the ways she spoke and acted in the classroom (Holland, 1998).

Clementine moved easily through the grade change to fifth grade. However, it is also important to note that she unquestionably followed authority, sacrificing her own interests and agency to adopt membership in the classroom. Thus, although Clementine could be said to have had a successful transition, according to the definition used in this study, being that she did not seemingly struggle to accommodate the new classroom rules or expectation, she also followed the authority set up for her unquestionably, with passivity, noting that, "The teacher says she is going to be equal to all of us. So, she is." Her beliefs about the teacher knowing what is required for successfully becoming a member of the fifth grade classroom and her insistence on becoming whatever the teacher wanted her students to be, while successful, was troublesome.

Summary through the lens of the model: Clementine

Clementine's experiences as an elementary student helped her define herself as a successful, bright, and integral part of the classroom, regardless of whose classroom she was a part of. In using the model to analyze how her transition progressed, I begin by describing how she saw herself in late summer before fifth grade had begun. Her entering construction of herself was that she expected the coming grade to go well, expecting her teacher to like her and for them both to get along well. Her prior experience, as well as the ideas she had constructed about school and teachers in general, allowed this notion to be instantiated as she began the fifth grade. Clementine constructed herself as a student who would be successful, figuring the fifth grade world as one in which she would know how to be a participant even before she entered it because of her success in the previous

grade levels. Because her constructed identities as a student were so in line with what her fifth grade teacher expected of students, she moved through the transition seamlessly. Very seldom, if ever, did she find instances where she and her teacher *mismatched*. Her perceptions of the teacher and the classroom were ones that the context validated. For example, she felt a teacher should have power and the classroom should be a strict place, and was happy to find both in her fifth grade classroom and her fifth grade teacher. She was thus able to use the strategies she had developed in the past, finding that once again, in the new classroom, they were effective. None of her attempts in the classroom limited or forced her to question her stance as a student or her identities as a member of the community. Instead, they were met with positive affirmation, either in the form of external teacher praise or internal justification for her actions. As attempts were made that met with success, she looped around and through the model again and again, continuing to construct herself in positive ways, continuing to see herself as a successful student who knew how to be a part of her fifth grade classroom world. In terms of her experience, it was seemingly "just like fourth grade, only harder [academically]." She continued to find that she knew how to negotiate the context of fifth grade in ways that provided her with positive feedback such that, in terms of the model, she moved through its course with a plethora of *matches* with successful results.



Martin

To describe Martin is to fall in love with a boy who dances and wiggles, who is unbelievably good at math, and adores science. As he entered fifth grade, Martin was a child whose penmanship was so awful that it allowed him to fall behind in all areas requiring written expression. Unreadable without months of expert practice, his writing until the fourth grade had been so illegible teachers had given up. Even he could not read his own writing when he would come across it days later. As a fourth grade student, his

fellow students had called his writing "Martin Scratch," yet overtime, as relationships built and his computer skills became better, he began to think of himself as a writer. His introduction to the computer had allowed him to compose stories and "publish" his words and stories. The computer gave him a space to author, to experience being a writer, and allowed his peers to become enamored of the hilarious characters he created, modeled, of course, after him. Reflecting a more checkered past as a student in school, his general attitude about school was more guarded than Clementine. "I don't know about all teachers. I mean, I've had a couple good ones, that know my smartness and then some bad ones…Like last year was better because we got to use the computers and learn that way too, which I was better at. This class has three computers but no one has ever touched them. Well, they've touched them but not with permission… You have to know me to get me." For Martin, the use of computers was one way that his transition into fifth grade was complicated. "I just wish I could write with them again," he said. For Martin, having the use of computers allowed him to be competent at a task he had formerly struggled with. The transition would have been easier if he was allowed to use the computer. For example, during an observation I wrote, "Martin asked Ms. Markowitz if he could use the computer to 'type it for prosperity' and Ms. M. said no. He then said he asked two other times and the answer 'keeps being the same.' He seems frustrated." For Martin, a computer was his pen, his way to write the world, his story. Yet, as of my observation, he had not found a way to make a successful attempt at using the computer and even in November, told me he didn't get to "use it yet" and that he was "mad because he couldn't get her to let [him]."

Martin believed transition would be easier once he had a teacher that, "fits with you, like easy to get along with" he said, a student should keep that teacher. He told me:

> I wanted to have a teacher last forrreeevveerrr. Because then you will know everything she does. And everything won't change all the time. Like, all right, we have centers and they are important for your education and then no more centers. Then guided reading is important for your education, and then no more. How come teachers say it is important and then the next one doesn't? It doesn't make sense. All we do is sit and do work, which you said [I was his 4th grade teacher] wasn't how you learn, so why do I

> have to do it? It is maddening. Teachers need to get their stuff together and bad ones should go away to the dark caves of the Antarctic.

It was a struggle sometimes for Martin to understand how to negotiate a classroom that had differing beliefs systems. He desired a teacher that matched his needs, his beliefs, and his understandings. He had many examples of mismatch, such as, "She hears so much about me and she doesn't do anything. She just lets it all happen to me. That's why now I am going to use that strategy from last year and write it all down, all of it as best as I…Every single thing someone says to me." Through writing down the things happening, a strategy he used last year to let his emotions out and to tell someone without having to actually tell someone, he found he could handle some of the struggles occurring in the fifth grade class. When such mismatches occurred, he called on a previous strategy to help in his current situation such that he could parley what he needed. Later, he wrote, "Daniel called me bugger boy. I am mad. I yelled he was the bugger boy, and Ms. Markowitz sent me out the room. I didn't do it first!!!" Almost all of his journal entries were of this sort, wherein he described instances where he felt the teacher "did nothing" and he ended up getting a negative consequence such as removal from class. Over time, he would, however, end up finding ways to be successful.

He crafted 79 lines of advice to a principal on how to make school a better place. When asked if he had thought about this before, he cited, "Yep, a lot of thinking goes in to being in school to make it better and especially if it isn't that good. You remember and then think it." Martin took control in internal ways, attempting to fake assignments, write out his anger, and manufacture a new, improved school for those who would inevitably follow in his transition to new grade levels. Thus, his transition was complicated by ideas and previous successes that did not translate into the new classroom.

However, he did eventually find ways to be successful in this new classroom. The world of school for Martin was one to be calculated. He could figure how to find power in some situations, and yet was unable to in others. Martin incited "faking goals" as a way to assert power. Because the teacher required her class to set goals for the year, he felt obligated to do so. However, by "faking" them, he found silent power that the teacher

was not likely to see. He said while laughing, "I'm faking my goals just to get it. We have to make them [goals] and I don't really have any goals except for one, pass the TAKS test. How I do that is listen and get A's on my work. But that isn't as hard as being in a bad group and stuff. A kid's gotta have some fun without the teacher knowing. I did that to you too." For Martin, employing agency in small ways was how he shaped his world and created a co-produced activity. Namely, the teacher was able to attain her goals (of having students complete the assignment) and Martin was able to attain power (through playing the game of completing the assignment in the way the teacher wanted). His motivation was geared to participating in the "fifth grade scene." He felt sure he would move on to the next grade because, "What choice do I have? I had my good teacher. My mom says it isn't fair but you're probably only get one in a lifetime. It sucks because I had mine. Bad. Doomed. And it is sad because when I have a good one, I am gooder. I feel like a better boy. Now I have to just get done." Martin's transition was made easier by his idea that he would not have another teacher he liked, one as good as he felt he had before. If he did, he would be happy, and if not, by the rule his mom had set up, he could exist as a student because he could, because he did. His identity in the classroom in which he found himself would eventually become more localized, more able to exist successfully in the particular fifth grade classroom. Still throughout this study, Martin was constrained by his presuppositions about his fifth grade class, about his previous classes, and about the experiences occurring daily which seemed to provide evidence for earlier notions.

As Martin acquired more knowledge about the figured world of Ms. Markowitz's classroom, he became increasingly able to function successfully in the fifth grade classroom. It is through this figuring of his classroom world, that he comes to transition into it. To do this, he constructed his identity through a process of reorientation and re figuring his existing self-understandings. He was able to disconnect his prior identities as a student and reconstitute himself in relation to the new world's needs and understandings, much like Holland's participants (1998) did during their term in AA. Those in AA had to construct themselves as alcoholics, and Martin had to construct

himself as a student in Ms. Markowitz's classroom. He, like most children, over time, was able to see himself as a member of the community known as "Ms. Markowitz's room.

Summary through the lens of the model: Martin

Martin's school experiences helped him to vacillate between identities as smart and interested in learning to that of being disabled as a writer and bored. "It depends on the teacher if I am good or bad," he told me. In using the model to analyze how his transition progressed, I begin by describing how he saw himself in late summer before fifth grade began. Martin's summer had been populated with riding his bike and playing video games. As he sat to talk to me, the video game he was playing, "beat the world Radliff record," was paused. He expected his imminent fifth grade year to be "bad." He felt he knew these fifth grade teachers and did not fancy any of them. He felt he "had had the one good teacher in his life," that his mom told him, "you only get one great teacher" so all he could hope for was "not horrific." Martin had spent his fourth grade year in a teacher's classroom with whom he felt he "fit." He entered fifth grade expecting it to go as well as it could go with a teacher he was sure he wouldn't like. Therefore, it could be said that Martin was conflicted about the year, saying it might go badly (certainly not as good as the year before), but it might be okay. He had much transcendent knowledge about how school should be, and had developed a large amount of nostalgia in relation to his previous experiences with teachers he thought were, "awesome for [him]."

His notions about himself as a student were substantiated as he encountered the fifth grade. He constructed himself as a child who could do well in school sometimes; while other times, he would struggle. Because his constructed identities as a student were only semi-aligned with those of his teacher, he found success and failure through his transition into the new context. His teacher would *mismatch* with him often, yet he would refigure how to be successful and attempt again. For example, his teacher felt he was being "snobby one time when [he] told her [he] wasn't going to do extra homework just because [he] was in trouble." The teacher called home, and he later told me he would

make sure that he just did not do the homework, rather than start a fight with the teacher. Strategies for success for Martin were sometimes, like the previous example, strategies that worked in his particular classroom but to some extent might be seen as negative. However, he also worked to develop strategies that were more positive, helping him to feel more a part of the classroom, certainly gaining more friends and what he would call, "peeps."

Martin's perceptions of the teacher and the classroom were ones that the context only sometimes validated. However, he was able to refigure his classroom experiences, relying on what he knew about the expectations and needs of the fifth grade teacher to become successful. Although he did not feel that teachers should have all the power, nor that teachers should be able to dole punishment out to children, he found that he could withstand and even adapt to the pressures and expectations of the new teacher. He was thus able to use some of the strategies he had developed in the past, finding that once again, some would be effective, leading to positive results in the fifth grade classroom. Martin came to find that his attempts in the classroom, although sometimes forcing him to claim identities he was not sure he agreed with, could lead him to understand that the teacher was the one in power and as such, he had to adapt, to re-identify strategies that would work in this particular context and community. He was met sometimes with a failed attempt, such as described above, but was able to refigure himself such that eventually he found success and the positive reinforcement (from either his peers, mother, self, or teacher) that he needed. As attempts were made that met with failure, he would loop around and through the model, continuing until success was found. Attempts could be one or many, but for Martin, unlike Sophie (whose case follows), he would figure out how to manage the new world, constructing himself as a student whom, although sometimes failed, eventually succeeded. Martin's experience was as he described it, "it is good mostly, sometimes bad, sometimes very bad, but mostly okay." He continued to find that, although he might not negotiate the teacher's/context's expectations correctly the first time, he would figure it would eventually.

Sophie

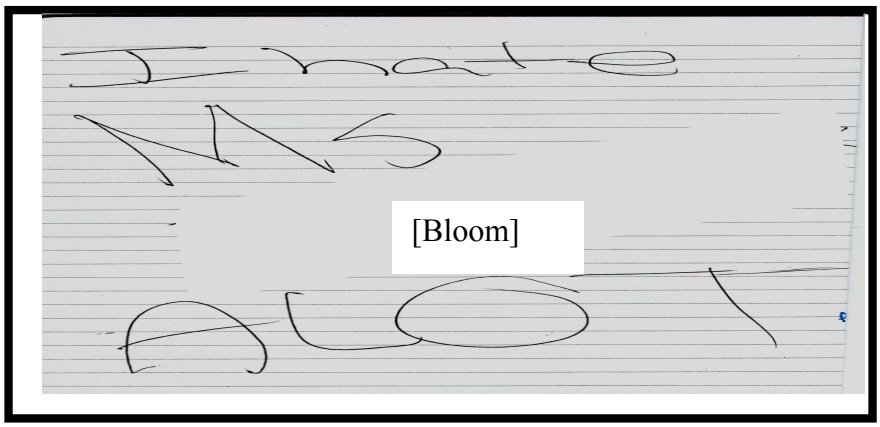
I began my notes after the focus meeting in October with, "It must be a hard thing to go from being seen as the chosen one, the student who is the smartest and most capable, to being one considered by her peers, a 'scapegoat' and a student who is in trouble 'all the time.'" This statement was written in reference to Sophie and comments made by her peers at the focus meeting:

> **Bette:** The teacher doesn't like you.
> **Sophie:** Yeah, right. I know.
> **Bette:** Miss Wilson, she is always getting in trouble, like always. She gets in trouble a lot. Like the best days are the ones she isn't there. Cause…I feel sorry for her.
> **Tzeitel:** I know, her and Barbara a lot.
> **Sophie:** I am in trouble a lot.
> **Miss Wilson:** How do you know you are in trouble?
> **Bette:** Cause she gets yelled at or told to sit down and shut up. Well, not shut up but something like that be quiet or something.
> **Miss Wilson:** Do you agree Sophie?
> **Sophie:** Yeah. I don't know why but I get yelled at all the time. I hate her.

For Sophie, her feelings about school and her place in Ms. Bloom's classroom were mediated and substantiated by her peers. Sophie stated in an interview, "She [the teacher] thinks kids are there for her to be the army leader, to boss them. I can't be okay with her treatment of me. I'm not like other people. I'm me and it isn't okay for me. You know?" Sophie felt alienated in this classroom, as if she was not an individual or one disliked by the teacher. She wrote, "I hate Ms. Bloom because she hates on me. If she would just like me a little then I could like her a little and be nicer to be in school."

Sophie was aware of how the experience in school this year was different than last year. "Last year my teacher kinda liked me. Like she picked me for things and I was responsible. But this year is bad, like really bad for me," Sophie told me. Sophie saw her experience in the fifth grade as different, more negative, than that of her previous years.

She spent much time drawing and writing her frustration in page after page of "hate" mail. Comments such as, "I hate Ms. Bloom were scrawled at regular intervals in her journals.



As such, her transition was filled with strife and struggle. It was a struggle she had not mastered by the time November and the end of the study rolled around. She still said, "I just don't get her. It's like she hates kids and I am a kid, so she hates me like she hates kids. She is a teacher, so she has power, and I am a kid, and I don't."

Examples in which Sophie's transition failed to produce positive, successful attempts were plentiful. They ranged in form from simple mismatches of time and space to mismatches representing how the teacher worked against her beliefs and values.

Time and space examples included occurrences such as on September 11, when I observed her in her classroom get up to go to the bathroom. She rose and walked away from her table. The teacher called her back stating, "Sit down, Sophie. You need to push your chair in." She went back, pushed it in and went to go again, to which the teacher said, "You need to push your chair in the first time. You know that. There isn't enough room for laziness. I'm about to start. Sit down." Her attempt to leave the room both times was met with a negative response from the teacher. In October, I asked her specifically about her bathroom habits. She responded, "I just don't go, like ever." Although I am certain this was not entirely true, for her, it was a truth. She felt insecure in her ability to know when she could leave the room and not be met with trouble. Sophie talked about

her experience in Ms. Bloom's classroom as tumultuous which was furthered through incidents such her need to stand up from her desk, or to move about the classroom.

Another example indicating her tribulations during the fifth grade transition involved homework. For Sophie, homework was "a pain." She spoke often of the unfairness she felt towards her teacher's view of the importance of having homework every night. She told me of her outside responsibilities, including basketball, church, choir, and her younger siblings. "On Wednesdays," she explained:

> I have choir, then basketball, and then I have to get my sister in bed. I don't get my homework done, like ever. So I have to do it at recess or some time else. One time, I didn't have my homework because… so I told Ms. Bloom that I would do it during free time and I didn't have my homework. She screamed at me! What a b*&#@. She yelled at me in front of the class and made me a model. So, I slipped [my homework] in the bucket under the other people's papers next time and she didn't catch me. I do that now so I don't get in trouble. But God would be mad.

For Sophie, the teacher was not understanding of her situation at home and her need to balance between her home and school expectations. The perceived inability to be understood by her fifth grade teacher, led to a mismatch of ideals and ultimately one of many instances of misalignment between herself and Ms. Bloom. The failed attempt (telling the teacher) leading to a new strategy that while successful, led her to a conflict morally with her beliefs and values.

In her journal, Sophie spoke often of power issues to which she was never able to reconcile. Twenty-one times she offered to "kill Ms. Bloom, hate Ms. Bloom, or kill herself." Later she told me perhaps that was a bit overdramatic, but it was, "how she felt." She spoke of power in ways that defied the conventions (teacher as all-knowing, omnipotent power) of her fifth grade class. While her teacher told me in the summer, "I want the kids to be able to tell me things," Sophie said in October, "If she screams at you, you can hate her but don't do anything or say anything because it ain't worth it. You have to shut up and do it, and I try, I do." According to Sophie, the fifth grade teachers, "yell, yell, yell, and they scream. They say stuff directly to you that makes your heart break. You feel like you want to kill yourself and them." In juxtaposition to Clementine, she

was unable to balance her own feelings and thoughts and beliefs with those of the teacher. She could not seem to find ways to match the ideas and expectations of her teacher, and instead found herself asserting power or resisting the teacher's expression of power through indirect ways such as writing in her journal or describing to me her angst.

During one focus meeting she grabbed a Dorito chip and said, "This is Ms. Bloom," crunching it in her mouth with force. She spoke of a strategy she used during rough times, "I think about how nice Ms. Bobbie is. But it is hard to think about the better days because Ms. Bloom is so bad to me. It makes my heart pump. But sometimes, if I think about how good Ms. Bobbie was, the badness of Ms. Bloom goes out my mind." She focused inward on the good parts of her former classroom teacher to help the feelings and "badness" leave her thoughts. She tried to find balance, but with every new attempt, power was seen as asserted by the teacher, the perception of the teacher, a mismatch with the teacher. The only strategy identified as successful for Sophie was ignoring the teacher and staying silent. This strategy was met with success as it eliminated some of the negative feedback she could receive. Still, she said, "She just always sees my bad." Even the teacher's silence felt hurtful to Sophie. She later described that Ms. Bloom was mean, not strict. I asked, "What's the difference?" She explained how she couldn't do well in her class because it was mean, not strict, that, "Strict is caring and mean is mean. Mean is kinda like being strict but when you're strict you're different. You teach and take your time and show them. Being strict is taking time to show them, making sure they go above the line. Being mean is forcing them above the line. It is bad to be forced."

Because of Sophie's insights about her teacher and the ways she mismatched with her teacher's expectations and wishes, she never did transition in positive ways. Behind what was happening in the classroom, Sophie was angry and mad, hurt and malicious in her thoughts. She started to "hate school, hate school, hate Ms. Bloom too." She described her teacher as a "witch," a "demon," and a "meanie," never becoming able to align herself with the teacher or figure out how to be successful in the classroom without

compromising her sense of self. As such, her transition was difficult and as she described, "hardcore hard." Although silent , she struggled to fit into the community.

Summary through the lens of the model: Sophie

Sophie's experiences as a fifth grader were unlike any previous experiences she had had as an elementary student. During the summer months, she defined herself as a successful ("I have lots of friends and good family and God"), bright ("I made commended on my TAKS test"), and an integral part of the classroom ("I help the teacher a lot"), regardless of whose classroom she was a part of. In using the model to analyze how her transition progressed, I begin by describing how she saw herself in late summer before fifth grade began. Upon entering, she expected her teacher to like her, just as the previous teachers had, and both she and the teacher would depend on each other in a sort of reciprocal relationship. Upon the start of fifth grade, it would seem that because of her prior success, her constructed identities as a student were in line with what her fifth grade teacher would expect. Her prior knowledge, as well as the ideas she had about school and teachers in general, made the beginning of fifth grade a tough and tumultuous time for Sophie. Her construction of self would suffer as strategy after strategy, time after time, were met with failure in the classroom. Sophie's strategies, while working successfully in her previous classrooms were met most often with what she saw as negative feedback. Very seldom, if ever, did she find instances where she and her teacher *matched*.

Her perceptions of the teacher and the classroom were ones that the context continually invalidated. For example, she felt a teacher should not have ultimate power and authority over the classroom: that instead students should share in that power. Foundational beliefs such as this one caused issues for Sophie as she attempted to align her beliefs with those of the teacher and the classroom. Unlike Martin, who could figure out how to negotiate the situation such that he was successful, even if meant holding seemingly negative beliefs. Sophie, on the other hand, could not allow herself to be okay with doing what the teacher expected if it clashed with that she believed was correct. Her transcendent ideas about how school should be, coupled with her positive experiences

with student identities in other classrooms, church, and at home, caused her grief. Although she might recognize what it took to receive positive feedback, she was rarely caught doing it. Even handing in papers when she was not told so as to avoid punishment, caused her angst that she wrote about in her journal. She was torn in such instances between what she thought God might want and what Ms. Bloom expected. She was thus not able to use the strategies she had developed in the past, finding that in this new classroom, they were ineffective, either internally mismatching with what she felt was right or just, and/or externally mismatching through failed attempts to integrate herself into the new context. Sophie's attempts to transition to the fifth grade classroom were limited, and she felt forced to question her stances as both a student and a human member of multiple communities.

As her attempts to become a part of the classroom were met with failure, or with limited success, Sophie continued to move through the model again and again, most times leading to a failed attempt to integrate her internal beliefs and personal identities with those required in the classroom. She continued to construct herself in positive ways when talking about herself outside of school saying things such as, "It will be better next year, I think it can't be worse," and, "I am a good kid, she just doesn't know it, but I know it, and my dad knows it." Although she continued to see herself as a good person, and perhaps a good student who was misunderstood in her current classroom situation, she was also someone who did not transition into the classroom completely. While all of the other children who knew how to be a part of her fifth grade classroom world and made concessions for how the world was structured such that they could allow themselves to adapt and assimilate in positive ways, Sophie struggled to allow herself to give up any portion of what she felt was deserved or correct. She was seemingly unable to separate her inner beliefs and self from the instances occurring in the classroom that caused turmoil during her time in the fifth grade as of the end of this study in November. She continued to find that although she knew what was called for in order to negotiate the context of fifth grade in ways that would possibly provide her with positive feedback, she was unwilling, as well as unable, to make such compromises and find such matches. In

terms of the model, she recursively moved through its course consistently mismatching with the teacher, sometimes unwilling to make new choices about strategy use that would end in success and other times unable to make good strategic maneuvers, ending instead in failure to transition into the fifth grade.

Summary of Case Studies

For these students, transition was met with mixed emotions and differing levels of difficulty. There were times when all the students found success and times of failure. Active knowledge construction, socially mediated by the student's engendered attempts to become participants in a new world. Although some examples were perhaps not examples of what the world would consider positive success such as Sophie's lying as a way to deflect the teacher's scolding, they were nonetheless attempts by those not in power that led to perceived positive reinforcement.

When a child such as Clementine began the year with clear expectations that aligned/matched with those of her teacher, the transition was not as complicated. It became a matter of knowing the rules and acting in ways that were allowed. When a child entered with insecurities about the quality of their teacher such as Martin, the transition was rockier. It left a place for the student to figure out how to negotiate the space, how to be successful as a member of the new classroom. It forced the students to reconstruct themselves to find more alignment and more successes in the environment. Eventually, the majority of children in this study were like Martin. They became successful classroom citizens, changing some of their notions, ideals, and beliefs to align more clearly with those of their teacher. For students such as Sophie, however, this realignment and reconstruction of oneself as a member of the classroom was hostile and problematic, leading to no successful transition by November, a seemingly long time within a school that gave but one year with a teacher. Even as the last focus group rolled around, Sophie sat justifying her thoughts, "It's not like, I mean, I don't want to hate fifth grade. I just do for lots of reasons." She attempted to rationalize her thoughts citing, "At least fifth grade is only one year and then we go somewheres else." Although perhaps not forever

providing a negative school experience for her, it is nonetheless, a transition that would likely create life-long memories of fifth grade for her as, “bad, yucky bad, horrible, and cruel”. Such students struggle to find themselves successful and fear later transitions.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Directions

This study described the process through which students negotiated their relationship with new teachers and their entry into new contexts during a within-school transition, how they perceived such a move, and their feelings before and during the transition. The study was guided by three questions:

4) What is the nature of transition for students moving from context to context, teacher to teacher, and grade to grade?
5) How does a student's composing illuminate the transition?
6) How do students attempt to create identities that allow for successful negotiation of the classroom worlds they are made to inhabit?

To answer these questions, I drew on the collection of stories, both oral and written, that the children and adults shared with me. I viewed these intimate conversations as co-constructions of meanings that emerged from the participants' interviews, focus meetings, journals, and my reflections and notes, across the four months of fieldwork. In chapters four and five I summarized the findings and discussed how the children constructed senses of themselves in light of the contextual demands, negotiating and implementing their identities such that they came to perceive themselves as successful. I also discussed how the children's figurings of their fifth grade world constructed who they were in the particular context of the fifth grade classroom and how transition moves across a dynamic interplay of the constructed notions of self and the world's feedback, in particular the teachers' roles in transitioning.

In this chapter, I summarize the findings and discuss how they speak to each of the research questions. I also discuss why the children's constructions of their identities is important for teachers and others who work with them, in addition to how programs can assist school transitions such that as children journey from one classroom and teacher to another, more positive experiences occur. I then discuss the implications of the study. I

finish by describing some of the limitations of my study and suggesting directions for further research.

The Nature of Transition for Children

Much of the transition research of the past has focused on the very young (preschool) or the move into adulthood (high school) with most consisting of holistic, summary data in the form of mass survey. This study provides information that helps to fill this void by providing a portrait of these students' transition between grade levels and classrooms. It looked at elementary schoolchildren as capable of speaking to their own experiences and gave voice to those often silenced. It is not often in schools that children are asked to speak about and judge the effectiveness and experiences of schooling. Instead of their voices being listened to seriously, these voices are most often judged from the outside—too loud, too quiet, not a correct answer, great answer. Despite the fact that understanding and reacting to one's experiences is a process every individual undergoes, the students in our schools are very seldom given the opportunity to speak about their own experiences and understandings.

Transition for children is a complex, venue-specific combination of prior knowledge and experiences and a new context. Children reported that a mismatch with a teacher made transitioning between contexts difficult. These feelings were intensified when multiple mismatches (or matches) occurred. When a child entered a new classroom, they initially felt secure in their feelings of "how to do school." However, because each classroom was shown to be unique, students had to negotiate how to be successful in the new situation.

The negotiation students engaged in during a new classroom transition was easier for a student, such as Clementine, whose personal beliefs *matched* with that of the new teacher. When such an alignment occurred, children did not have issues conciliating the new with the old. As such, they found solace in the fifth grade classroom, just as Clementine did.

For the majority of other students, the transition was more of a challenge and required more concession between those in power, namely the new teacher, and the children's personal beliefs and prior experiences (especially those that occurred in the preceding grade). Such concession led to many issues for me as a researcher such as when a child found a negative strategy (such as not telling the truth) that was successful for diverting or eliminating negative response and outcome, yet allowed them to achieve their goal. The challenge for most students came as they tried to reconcile what they felt was true and right based on both experiences and memories of the past when what was needed to become a member of the community of the classrooms was different. The children spoke about such challenge with transitioning in terms of five large *mismatching* areas: physical needs, time needs, psychological needs, needs for teacher not to complain, as well as the needs of the student mismatching the expectations of the teacher. These five areas caused many of the children to spend weeks attempting to figure out how to maintain a sense of well-being while allowing the teacher, who positioned herself in these classrooms as the authority, to continue on a regimen not in line with what they felt should occur or with what children had experienced in the past. Tzeitel spoke about the differences and the troubles she experienced while trying to refigure the world of school:

> Now, I had a good teacher that makes me feel good about me and then I move to another class and it is so different and is more like Ghana and I can't like it because I know how it could be. I had a good one. Like, I thought American school was one way, like my other class, and then it is like this one, and it is different and not comfortable.

The experiences involving the challenging nature of transition were profound for nearly all the students. Like the AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) participants in Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998), these children had to refigure the classroom for what was, "relevant to, and valued in (or not), in relation to a frame of meaning," (p. 121) a virtual world, namely that of the fifth grade classroom according to Ms. Beaches, Ms. Bloom, or Ms. Markowitz Students' agency was limited in their new classroom; they felt it as Daniel said, "[Students] You have to do it because…because it is how it is and some teachers let you change it and some don't. You have to get it which one it is." Their

social position within their classroom, defined by and within the structure placed by the more powerful member (the teacher), affected the children's perspectives as well as their subscription to the values and norms that were promoted by the new classroom. In other words, the teacher and her perceived power influenced students, making them keenly aware of the expectations that necessitate the inclusion as a successful part of the classroom membership. Because of the teacher's perceived power, the children's values, beliefs, and understandings changed to be more representative of the teacher's, more in line with the promoted/needed identities of the classroom.

Transition was a step-by-step process that involves both being able to manage one's well-being in terms of retreating from the possibility of punishment and finding the recipe for winning, known as becoming a member of the classroom. "With competency, the various elements of the situation become organized into a gestalt" (Holland et al., p. 117). This organizational competency occurred over time for all of the children, except for Sophie (who did not make a clear transition) and Clementine (who did not have to negotiate learning for transition to occur). After some time in the fifth grade classroom, most children "got it." They became able to successfully manage their goals within the class, taking the strategies and notions they had learned since being a part of the fifth grade and attempting to internalize them such that next time, they would again be successful. These perceived successful strategies developed heuristically over time and aided the ways they were able to negotiate the space of the fifth grade classroom. Thus, time for learning, negotiation, experience, and acceptance of the ways of being in the fifth grade classroom would provide for an easier transition. Students felt that when the teacher complained or blamed negative behaviors in the fifth grade classroom or had trouble with fifth grade tasks, on previous teachers, she was insulting them and their history as students. Perhaps as a result of such feedback, or perhaps because of the nature of time impacting memory, each student shared nostalgic ideas about the fourth grade and several transcendent notions about schooling. Such negative communicatory experience between the teacher and the students impacted their ability to feel or build a positive, secure relationship with their teacher and transition into the new classroom.

Student's Composing and Transition

The texts that children produced, both oral and written, were lit with images, words, and experiences that dictated and defined the ways the children were within the classroom world. The students in this study oriented themselves in ways that attempted to elicit their inclusion in the new classroom, while maintaining their personal beliefs about how school should be. Composing moved along a continuum for most students. Writing became an outlet, first as a way to share emotions, feelings of insecurity, and misunderstandings between previous and novel classrooms and power structures, to a more reporter style of writing in which students shared what was happening, and lastly to a stance more in line with the new classroom expectations. For several students, acquiring the fifth grade classroom's rules surrounding writing at approved times, about approved subjects, meant allowing a schism between what they thought or felt was right and what the teacher in the fifth grade expected and enforced.

Composing acted as a *knowledge-telling* (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) task in which the children regulated their own emotions through transforming, evaluating, gathering, and even abandoning them as they engaged in the task of writing. For example, Martin began his first journal entry with, "I just hate her. She is making me crazy." By November he wrote, "I like her sometimes she is a good teacher but not the best." Martin regulated his feeling of anger towards his teacher and/or situation, over time transforming as well as monitoring it into affect he had control over and that was more beneficial to him. Examples such as Martin's in which the individual child regulates emotions through composing, were common. Communicating feelings, and as Dyson (1995) posited acting as "meaning negotiators, learning to participate in the social world, to adopt, to resist, or to stretch available worlds" (p. 18) was a way in which children negotiated the act of transitioning. In order to participate successfully in their classroom contexts, these children had to learn ways to share their understandings, negotiate themselves within the community, and respond to adversity with their limited power. Composing acted as a venue for establishing personal agency and power, where the

children assumed a listener who would read their journal carefully, would respond to their world appropriately, and perhaps even service their membership in the fifth grade classroom accordingly.

The results of my study confirmed results of studies such as Boekaerts (1996) and Downson and McInerney (2001) who argued that students pursue goals to develop their own competencies, increase their sense of belonging in a specific domain, and protect their well-being and self beliefs in a learning environment. In the children's writing, this balance between well-being and negative emotions was readily visible, one for which the students: a) sought friendships that sustained and managed their negative emotions, b) attempted hidden control over the teacher, and c) developed task goals more in line with what they believed the situation dictated. Eventually, the girls in the focus group began to call themselves "Focus Girls," developing friendships and alliances between each other despite the fact that they were in multiple fifth grade classrooms. They felt, as Bette said, "We just get each other." I would argue that the focus group and journaling allowed such a bond to develop. Journaling and group meetings acted as facilitator, for thoughts and expressions that otherwise might have lain dormant or internal. Where the other students in the classes were negotiating perhaps more clandestinely, these students were forced through their writing and oral text tasks to negotiate more explicitly.

Writing acted as a way for the children to respond actively to the adversity they felt as they transitioned into a space in which they did not know how to respond. It also illuminated children's abilities to develop competencies in a novel domain, to maintain the motivation and persistence for membership, and enhance the adaptive functioning that is expected in children. The children's writing showcased such traits. As the children participated in the fifth grade classroom, they nearly all (with the exception of Sophie) had figured out how to negotiate and figure the fifth grade world successfully, developing mechanisms and understandings about how things were and what they were expected to do.

Children had strong motivation to become members, as they did not feel they had a choice. The classroom was the students' for a year, with no choice or power to change

it. The required attendance within a setting was in contrast to Holland's (1998) AA study in which participants were able to adjust their membership or opt out altogether. Lastly, as Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986) reported, writing was a process, one in which power relationships privileged some and subordinated others. However, gave them a voice, a shift from what they were given in the classroom. I noted that Bette, Bruce, C.C., Clementine, Daniel, Dixie, Sophie, Stella, and Tzeitel were children who used writing regularly to fame their experiences actively. They could protect their belief system in ways not available to them outwardly in the classroom where they felt forced to adopt certain understandings in order to be successful. The children exhibited a sort of resilient adaptation to the new situation and teacher that was shown in their composing. In general, children revealed a distinct ability to figure their world in ways to find success in a complicated and abstract world.

Identity Construction and Success

Individuals are both influenced by as well as influence significant others in a figured world. They construct and negotiate their identities in relation to these others also. The children in this study had to renegotiate their sense of self, their sense of how school was, based on the new system and members they encountered. The new social world of the fifth grade emphasized an ongoing, dynamic dialogue between the intrapersonal and interpersonal components in the construction and understanding of their identity (Sarup, 1996).

The children were assigned to the fifth grade classroom, identifying themselves as having with little power and influence. During transition, they needed to refigure, re-story, and reinvent themselves from the old to the new, such as when Aaron told me, "I was like badder last year, but smarter. This year I am dumber because I am quieter." For him, by adapting to the new "quieter" expectation, he began to story himself as someone who was better behaved, but perhaps was not as smart. Or Stella stated, "Last year, I was like a teacher's pet when I got hugged but I did anyway, but this year, I am just a baby if I need hugs, so I don't." Stella, like Aaron, had to refigure who she was in the world of

the fifth grade, finding ways to be successful and yet mediate her own conceptions of herself and the world.

The children in this study negotiated both a personal and collective identity, finding friendships as one way to establish identification as a fifth grader in Ms. X's classroom, as well as becoming a partner with others navigating a similar fate in the classroom. Lewis (2001) posited that such personal and group figurings were a way identity was evolutionary, evolving from prior experiences, coalescing with others' perceptions and salient understandings. When the personal and the social aspects of identity were brought together, such as was evident during the transition, the children negotiated both their beliefs about and understandings of the new context. Over time, children became more able to be successful, to know how to interact in positive ways, aligning with the expectations within the community. However, they also developed and performed their identities as fifth graders in direct contrast to what they held as their personal beliefs about school and society. For example, Sophie said she was a student who told the truth. However, after several months in the fifth grade, she co-opted such a belief for one that was more successful in her classroom, namely, telling the truth only sometimes. This construction, of herself as someone who tells the truth only when it was perceived as not leading to a negative consequence, showed the dynamic process of development of one's identities over the transition period. Each teacher's group of fifth graders molded into a particular group identity which became salient for each student as they made the transition. The sediment from the past transformed into norms and aspirations of the new group through multiple experiences and negotiation of their "selves" within the new domain. This negotiation affected and guided their new identity constructions.

As Chaitin (2004) claimed, these children also brought together both their personal and social aspects of identity, stressing one over the other depending on the situation at hand. In order to be a part of the classrooms, students had to develop group membership and representations of themselves that meshed with their abilities to be successful. All children except for Sophie were able to do this, despite occasional

feelings of the trauma involved in transitioning, trouble advocating for themselves or in defining their roles in the new situations.

The interpersonal (social and cultural) and intrapersonal (psychological) dialogue expressed by the students had components for both the construction and the understandings of the identity they would project (Sarup, 1996). These children not only appropriated the identity they were afforded in the figured world of the fifth grade, they also formed personal senses and perspectives conducive to successful navigation therein. Thus, they created multiple, personalized identities. They were able to author themselves in ways that worked, regardless of any ubiquitous negative experiences or transgressions brought about by the teacher. Although these children could certainly be described as upset or even angry, they eventually developed identities that worked within the contexts. However, the degree to which students internalized the new notions is questionable. Just as they left the previous knowledge about successful school navigation that did not work behind in favor of fifth grade ways and means, it is not to say that they have forgotten, nor that they will hold steadfast to the new understandings. There was plenty of evidence to the contrary. In actuality, what occurred was that the students shelved what they learned or knew internally for more outwardly strategies and identities that the context required, knowing what they thought (nostalgia, transcendent ideas, world experiences, etc.) about school and thinking that it "could be different" at a later time and in a later space. As these children's narratives unfolded and transformed, students were able to validate or invalidate a sense of self in the lived world of fifth grade, to find their "voice," and arrange it within an activity.

Lastly, current research on transition does not use the children's words as data and insight into their lives, nor do they extend the notion of transition as a negotiated instance occurring internally, individually, and yet socially and externally. Through researching the authoring of figured worlds for children in transition, we become better able to understand and facilitate teaching at the level, and in the space and time, that individual students need.

Through participation in and construction of worlds, expertise develops that allows better functioning within the context (Holland et. al, 1998). However, the expertise that develops can also cause a positional shift and identities that are not necessarily positive in nature, nor conducive for moral development. The dispositions several of these children developed included such things as lying and cheating to keep the teacher's anger at bay, changed the way they interacted in school, making them seem less child-like and liberating their internal beliefs from those enacted and expected in the classroom. Through dissociating their beliefs about how school should be from what actually was occurring, children have able to interact successfully with the teacher, context, and peers. Such a dissociation also occurred as they lied or omitted the truth yet facilitated often successful attempts at legitimizing oneself in the classroom. As children passively and unquestionably accepted the "way things were," versus "the ways things are," they changed the ways they believed and understood their place in the world of school. Children seemed to develop a disposition, cast-typing themselves as not powerful, under the control of their teachers during their fifth grade tenure.

Children became a "collocation of selves" (Holland et. al., 1998, p. 235), identities that were multiple and complex. The figured world of fifth grade moved through the children like a Hollywood movie, influencing the costume choices for the year, creating lasting memories in later years, but overall, probably only vaguely reconceptualizing the nature of schools. Much like last year's Spiderman costume, previous schooling was recalled fondly, transcendently, and with love. The relegation of memories to the past is inherent in human beings, every occurrence becomes the past, just as the nature of transition omnipresent, always occurring and dynamic. Identities were forged and re-forged, scripts accepted and rejected, and bits of the children edited and even erased.

Because of the interesting ways that students negotiated their fifth grade classroom domains, there are many implications regarding the nature of classroom life as well as the ways researchers approach classroom research involving transition. Implications for practice suggest the importance of listening to students and developing

relationships and knowledge about who they are. Theoretically implicative are notions of the relationship teachers have to power, the role of the teacher in the transition of students to new grade levels, as well as the role of students' voice and discourse in studies about them. The following chart shares some of the implications of this research and is by no means exhaustive, but instead is a starting point for further discussion and later studies.

Theoretical Implications and Implications for Practice

Because of the interesting ways that students negotiated their fifth grade classroom domains, there are many implications for the nature of classroom life as well as the ways researchers approach classroom research involving transition. Implications for practice suggest the importance of listening to students and developing relationships and knowledge about who they are. Theoretically implicative are notions of the relationship teachers have to power, the role of the teacher in the transition of students to new grade levels, as well as the role of students' voice and discourse in studies about them. The following chart shares some of the implications of this research and is by no means exhaustive, but instead is a starting point for further discussion and later studies.

Theoretical Implications

According to Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) identity is a combination of both in personal and collective spaces and relationships one engages with. Though invoking such internal and external facets of oneself in the world, one's identities are created. From one space to another, children face challenges as they move amongst and between them, from one classroom and one teacher to another. From this, children must re-figure their notions of the world and of their school. This is what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as *situated learning* in *communities of practice*. For children, such as the ones in the study, the negotiation of a new context and people has both strife and success and is *situated* in the very experiences and contexts/*communities of practice.* It is "how newcomers are inducted into socially enduring and complex activities" (Holland et al., 1998, 57). As such, each classroom, each figured world is different, each

classroom a different contextual space, different strategies for successful navigation are needed. Children must construct and re-construct *histories in person* (Holland and Lave, 2001) so that they are successful in novel realms. They study the institution in practice and, like Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed, work through the "enduring struggles" between and among people, groups, and institutions to transform them into usable, actionable identities.

The figuring of new worlds is complicated business, the relationships between oneself and the worlds engaged with interact in larger, "institutionalized" forms of power. These power relationships offer a depth to the communities of practice and figured worlds that both Lave and Wenger (1991) and Holland et al. (1998) speak of. Through the day-to-day activities the children engage in as they transition to the new classrooms and teachers, identities are forged in response. "Neophytes are recruited into and gain perspective on such practices and come to identify themselves as actors of more or less influence, more or less privilege, and more or less power in these worlds" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 60). This was evident in the ways the students saw Sophie in comparison to others, as well as in the ways they sought to become a part of the classroom, giving up on some of their own beliefs and moral obligations to do so. When students move from one context to another, different power structures occur, some centralized around the teacher, and others, decentralized. When moving between them, students struggle to know what roles they have.

During the transition process, there are ways to facilitate a smoother, more positive experience for children. Because shifts occur during transition that may result in difficulties as students adjust to the new norms or expectations in the classroom, activities conducted prior to and during times of transition, that engage students in learning the strategies, rules, and roles of the classroom in supportive and positive contexts may facilitate the students' to the new situation and teacher. Giving students opportunity to talk about their experiences gives them agency and responsibility for their lives as students. However, introductory explanations and activities may not be sufficient for all students, necessitating ongoing support and instruction during the transitions.

Lastly, like Noddings (1984/2003) children possess a need to love the teacher as well as to feel loved by the teacher. They hold on to the positive experiences in attempts to connect with the teacher and to forge a positive and caring relationship. Above all else, this relationship seems to create an easy or difficult transition into a new world. When love is perceived as present, the teacher acts as a liaison of sorts into the new classroom. Emotions, such as love and hate, are prevalent for children during stressful times such as transition. Relationship and caring are important to children. Teachers should foster caring relationships with the children such that they are aware of, and define themselves as loved.

Emotions are a lens through which teachers and researchers can establish how those in her classroom are feeling, in regards to not just isolated incidents, but over time. Through looking at and discussing the ways children illustrate those emotions, valuable insight into classroom life can occur. These insights and discussions can allow for more understanding about how and why some children fail to transition positively while others face seemingly less challenge while additionally providing space for researchers to see the internal struggles externalized.

Implications for Practice

Classrooms are unique microcosms, worlds that are different each year, monitored by different "heads" and handled through differing rules and expectations. Teachers should be aware of these challenges that students face as they engage in a new situation, with new expectations and rules of membership. As such, children need to be given time to adjust to new contexts and teachers, in the same way that adults are allowed time and space. Teachers should anticipate this and plan time and strategies to facilitate the transition. If asking students to engage in activities new to them, it is important to provide students with time, strategies, and explanation for the changes. Activities might include: whole group discussions about the differences they foresee, guidelines for the expectations, repeated demonstrations of the expectations (in positive, self-affirming ways) provide opportunities for students to expand their understanding about the new

venue's expectations and they should listen to those in their classrooms to gain valuable insight about their own teaching. Children have knowledge about what works for them as learners and particularly like hands-on, activity oriented learning. Teachers should include a discussion of activities and explanations for the classroom structure as well as act as a liaison to membership in the classroom in non-threatening, open-to-negotiation ways. Holding discussion and giving children the space to discuss those things occurring to them, provides them access to understanding how and why it is happening. Teachers should plan for these difficulties and be aware that over time, students will get better at negotiating the new expectations and norms. For additional implications, see Table below.

Table 14: Theoretical Implications and Implications for Practice

Theoretical implications	Implications for Practice
Children face challenges as they move from one classroom and teacher to another causing them to re-*figure* their notions of the world of school.	Teachers should be aware of the challenges that students face as they engage in a new situation, with new expectations and rules of membership.
Children engage in the negotiation of contexts and people, just as adults do, with some strife and some success.	Children should be given time to adjust to new contexts and teachers, in the same way that adults are allowed time and space. Teachers should anticipate this and plan time and strategies to facilitate the transition.
Children are able to comment about, and aware of, how the system of school works.	Teachers should listen to those in their classrooms to gain valuable insight about their own teaching. Children have knowledge about what works for them as learners and particularly like hands-on, activity oriented learning.
The *figured world* of each teacher's classroom is different and requires somewhat different strategies for success.	
Power structures are inherent in classrooms. When students move from one context to another, different power structures occur, some centralized around the teacher, and others, decentralized. When moving	

between them, students struggle to know what roles they have.	
Activities conducted prior to and during times of transition, that engage students in learning the strategies, rules, and roles of the classroom in supportive and positive contexts may facilitate the students' to the new situation and teacher.	If asking students to engage in activities new to them, it is important to provide students with time, strategies, and explanation for the changes. Activities might include: whole group discussions about the differences they foresee, guidelines for the expectations, repeated demonstrations of the expectations (in positive, self-affirming ways) provide opportunities for students to expand their understanding about the new venue's expectations.
Shifts occur during transition that may result in difficulties as students adjust to the new norms or expectations in the classroom.	Teachers should plan for these difficulties and be aware that over time, students will get better at negotiating the new expectations and norms.
However, introductory explanations and activities may not be sufficient for all students, necessitating ongoing support and instruction during the transitions.	Teachers should include a discussion of activities and explanations for the classroom structure as well as act as a liaison to membership in the classroom in non-threatening, open-to-negotiation ways.
Giving students opportunity to talk about their experiences gives them agency and responsibility for their lives as students.	Holding discussion and giving children the space to discuss those things occurring to them, provides them access to understanding how and why it is happening.

Children possess a need to love the teacher as well as to feel loved by the teacher. They hold on to the positive experiences in attempts to connect.	Relationship and caring are important to children. Teachers should foster caring relationships with the children such that they are aware of, and define themselves as loved.
	Taking away recess from the whole class or disseminating whole class reprimands punishes those that are acting within expected roles.
	Implementing new positive reinforcers such as new behavior plans, extra incentives, fun activities, or time with the teacher makes classroom life better.
For children in situations they perceive as negative, taking on a "poor me" identity gives the children self-control and agency.	
Emotions are prevalent with children during stressful times such as transition. Through looking at and discussing the ways children illustrate those emotions, valuable insight into classroom life can occur.	Emotions are a lens through which teachers can establish how those in her classroom are feeling, in regards to not just isolated incidents but over time.

Limitations

The hypotheses and implications of this research have to be conceptualized within one school, with three teachers, and twelve student participants. As such the generalizability of this study is limited. However, I have attempted to provide a sufficient description of the classrooms and students, and specifically the children's experiences of transition, so that the reader can make decisions about the comparability of this setting, and these experiences, to other settings. Thus, while generalizability of findings is not appropriate in all cases, efforts have been made to increase the transferability of these findings.

Another limitation involves my roles as both former teacher and faculty at Radliff Elementary and my role as researcher. While not in the role of teacher at the time of the study, it is impossible to know, other than through the expressions of the children, how they saw my role as researcher versus their perceptions of me as a former teacher.

Therefore, it could be said that the children spoke to me as their teacher, their former teacher. Still, attempts were made to reduce such bias such as member-checking and multiple meeting times. In addition, children from two other classrooms (other than those graduating from my fourth grade classroom) were used. None of the children were required to write anything they did not want to write, and nothing was to be told to their new teachers. However, as in any study for which the researcher has an intimate relationship with the subjects, bias while inherent can be restricted through choices, such as those made in this study.

Another limitation of the research reported here was the lack of opportunity to collect data on more than one grade level transition. While one transition was sufficient to develop, refine, and support working hypotheses, additional cycles, following the same children, would have provided the opportunity to trace and illuminate any changes that took place over a longer term and with additional children.

A related limitation was my abrupt departure from the school following data collection. Although I spent more time than was initially proposed in focus meetings, as the Christmas holiday came, I did not return for any more focus groups, leaving the children, although they had known this would happen with their relationship with me ending. They left my study on transition with little, if any preparation forth from focus meetings or talks with Miss Wilson to no more special sessions. Field exit thus occurred over the Christmas holiday. To compensate for my abrupt field exit, letters, handwritten and sent via snail mail, were sent to each child and continue today.

A final limitation of this research is directly related to the complexity of transition. There are a number of factors that contribute to the teacher's role and student's experience of transition. Because this research was narrowed to focus exclusively on twelve students' perceptions and experiences, I was thus not able to address other issues related to transition. This research, for example, did not look at the teachers perception of transition, or ways they could provide scaffolding for such a time. It also did not look at the nature of transition for children not speaking English although the school used was primarily not English speaking, leaving a vast number of students' voices unheard. Future

research may examine how issues such as these are related to the ones explored more fully in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations for future research arise from this study. First, researchers may want to explore ways to alleviate the pressures students feel as they transition through grades at the same school. Much like the transition literature suggests, transition is a time of complex adjustments and as socio-constructive theory would posit, inner negotiation is active, dynamic, and meaningful, affecting the identities and perceptions of children (Battle, & Mays, 1982; Blatchford, Blumenfeld, Pintrich, & Hamilton, 1986; Bredekamp & Glowacki, 1995; Cushman, 2006; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Kagan & Neuman, 1993; Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992; Reyes & Hedeker, 1993). Because transitions are inherent in schooling, it would be valuable to know what interventions and support are worthwhile in providing for students who move "across the hall." This type of study could provide insights into the factors that affect students' developing understanding of themselves, the negotiation of new surroundings, and the impact of more structured preparatory activities in comparison to teacher directed "get to know you" activities.

Second, researchers may want to investigate the process by which students come to a context and make a transition easily, focusing specifically on what factors allow for smooth transition, and how those same influences could be promoted across classroom contexts and grade levels. Findings from this type of investigation would extend the findings reported in this study by helping develop a better understanding of what occurs during positive transitions so that facilitation of such transitions could occur more often.

Third, examining how the theoretical model of transition works in relation to a broader group of teachers and students could potentially have consequences for the way students value (or do not value), learn (or do not learn), develop strategies that are successful and positive (or do not), as they exit schooling altogether. In addition, it seems to have important insights for later citizenship and humanity. If it is true that as students

are transitioning in schools they learn what works outside the confines of school, when lying and cheating is something they develop as strategies that work, we teach our children that the world is not a place for the truth, that citizenship and membership involves hedging the truth. We teach them that power is for the strong over the weak, that children are in need of "fixing," that they are inherently unworthy of respect. Such notions propagate and are passed along for future generations.

One of the more intriguing options for future study is the role that teachers play in the process of transition. This study did not use the teacher's experiences as factors in the ease or trouble with which children experienced transition. As such, a valuable feature is left unheard. Future research should look at the ways teachers succeed, and perhaps fail, at extending the community's expectations and needs for membership to those neophyte wanna-be members.

Lastly, a category that arose in my data and needs additional research is that of the role of power relationships in classrooms, both in terms of transition and in terms of classroom structures. The category of power emerged with great force driving the behaviors and thoughts of the participants. It became apparent that students held various goals while participating in the new classrooms. These goals ranged from "don't get in trouble" to "make the teacher love me" and presented aspect of the children's transition related to power. Questions looking to how the teacher's role is enacted and how it is or is not predicating positive roles for the children should be studied. As Bette said, "I don't sometimes know a word but I don't say nothing because I think it's a little stupid that I don't know the word because I'm already in fifth grade, and I should know more than half of the vocabulary even if I know Spanish better," to which Aaron agreed, "Yeah, Me too. It's just like we are wacko to them, we are not trying… but we are. They are just in charge so they decide who is loco y estupido." As Bette and Aaron's discourse showed, teacher power is something in need of more direct, thorough study as it relates to a teacher's intentions and students' misconceptions. Social positioning as it relates to children in schools should be studied *in situ* to illuminate more clearly how one builds experience and identity.

Conclusion

"Most adults just don't get it. They don't listen. They say they do, but they don't. Or they don't care cause they don't do nothing about it."
-Sophie

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain's (1998) notion that languages create, sustain, and constrain certain selves and that voices from others exist within a space of authoring, showcases the constantly present, seemingly invisible nature of a society as well as its fundamental and influential power. The problematic nature of transition between contexts is often overlooked by researchers and teachers. Instead of personal and meaningful focus, researchers tend to parlay structural transitions, space changes between buildings. Although I would assert that those transitions can also be problematic, I additionally would argue that transition to another classroom, teacher, and grade level within the same school is also difficult, fraught with navigation errors and successes. The research analyzed in this paper indicates that the transition to new classrooms, teachers, and grade levels is complex and as such, requires support for students to develop new strategies related to both the "how" and the "why" of the new contextual demands.

The research described here helps develop a theoretical notion of how transition occurs for students moving between teachers, classrooms, and grade levels. It provides insights into how children negotiate and traverse a new landscape, creating identities that help to manage such lifestyle changes. While some others have noted the importance of transition support when moving to a new school, or to a new developmental touchstone (such as kindergarten, middle school, and/or high school), few, if any, have addressed this process from the point of view of the children as they tackle a within-school transition. The research reported here provides a beginning look at how children negotiate transition "across the hall" to become legitimate and successful members in a particular classroom context. It illustrates the profound influence and power teachers have to support positive growth and development in students of strategies for later transitions.

The results of this study hint at the trajectory teachers and administrators may need to take if they want to want to facilitate more positive transitions within their schools. The findings clearly indicate a progression in students' competencies within the new classroom format and show that this progression is influenced by factors that can be impacted by interventions should they occur. Children are adaptive and find success in many ways. In sum, this study offers theory-based hypotheses that contribute to the current theoretical knowledge base concerning transitions. It furthers such knowledge by complicating and then identifying transition as multi-faceted and multi-spatial process, occurring more often, and with more consequences than previously thought.

APPENDIX A

Informal Inventory for Interview

Part A: parents and students
Part B: teachers

Part A:

1. Tell me about school.
2. Who in your life have been good teachers?
3. What feelings does school bring up for you?
4. What is the most important subject in school?
5. What is your favorite subject?
6. Are students ever bored in school? Why do you think that?
7. Have your (child's) teachers been good for you/r (child)?
8. Talk about your experiences writing
9. What do you think about yourself as a writer?
10. What do you think your (child's) struggles next year will be?
11. What emotions come for you when you think about (your child) moving to a new teacher?

APPENDIX A (CONT.)

Informal Inventory for Interview

Part A: parents and students
Part B: teachers

Part B:

1. Who in your life have been good teachers?
2. What feelings does school bring up for you?
3. What is the most important subject in school?
4. What is your favorite subject?
5. Are students ever bored in school? Why do you think that?
6. Talk about your experiences writing
7. What do you think about yourself as a writer?
8. What do you think your struggles next year will be in terms of planning and execution of writing lessons?
9. How do you think fourth grade teachers do as writing teachers?
10. How do you handle the different writing skill abilities in your classroom?
11. If someone came to your classroom for writing, what would they experience?

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS 9-28-06

1. What has been the hardest change you've had to make this year?
2. What do you think your teacher thinks about you? How do you know?
3. How do you handle when you are mad?
4. What makes you happy in class?
5. What makes you sad in class?
6. When you think about school, what do you think about?
7. How does a teacher affect the environment?
8. Tell me about your friends.
9. How does the schedule affect you?
10. What strategies do you use in your classroom to get the answer to something you want to know?
11. What are the rules in your classroom? How do you know they are rules? Are they the same or different than other years?
12. Why do you think your teachers are the way they are?
13. What do you want to be when you grow up?
14. Is school helping you to get there?
15. Do you want to be a part of this research group? Why?
16. What is the most important part of the day? Why?
17. Describe the move to fifth grade.

APPENDIX C

VISITS to the FIFTH GRADE

August 21st (planned check in after school)

August 31st: FOCUS GROUP @ 3pm

September 7th

September 11th, 12th, and **13th**

September 18th and **September 21st** (planned check in after school)

September 26th and **September 29th:** FOCUS GROUP @ 3pm

October 4th and **October 5th**

October 12th

October 16th (planned check in after school) and **October 18th**

October 24th and **October 27th:** FOCUS GROUP @ 3pm

October 30th

November 1st

November 13th and **November 16th:** *LAST* FOCUS GROUP @ 3pm

IRB PROTOCOL #

APPENDIX D (1)

TEACHER

Transitions and Writing

Conducted By:
Jennifer C. Wilson, Doctoral Student
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Language and Literacy Studies
jwilson@teachent.edb.utexas.edu
512-698-5911

Beth Maloch, Professor
Department Curriculum and Instruction
Language and Literacy Studies
bmaloch@mail.utexas.edu
(512) 232-4262

Invitation to participate:
You are invited to participate in a study about the role of transition in writing. This form provides you with information about the study. As the person in charge of this research, I will also describe this study to you and address questions you may have. Before you decide whether or not to participate, please read the information below and let me know if there is anything you don't understand. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling me.

The purpose of this study is to help us learn more about how students experience transition, and specifically how transition affects writing and the writing process. Your responses to the questions through the interview will help us better understand the types of goals, expectations, and experiences that teachers have and the ways that transitions interact with them.

Should you choose to participate, your responses will be kept entirely confidential. They will not be attached in any way to this form, nor will they have any identifying information attached to them.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to complete two formal interviews, as well allow my presence in your classroom 2 days per week in a decreasing capacity. In addition, I will need access to your students' writing.

Total estimated time to participate in study is three months.

Risks and Benefits of participation: There are no real risks associated with your participation in the study. However, you may experience a little fatigue as you work to respond to the questionnaires, but you may take a break or stop entirely at any time. Potential benefits for you include the chance to reflect and consider your experiences as a teacher and a specifically a teacher of writing.

Compensation: There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

The **records** of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the **confidentiality** of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to

identify you as a subject.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, contact us (see phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair of UT Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature of Participant Date

IRB PROTOCOL #

APPENDIX D (2)

PARENT

Transitions and Writing

Conducted By:
Jennifer C. Wilson, Doctoral Student
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Language and Literacy Studies
jwilson@teachent.edb.utexas.edu
512-698-5911

Beth Maloch, Professor
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Language and Literacy Studies
bmaloch@mail.utexas.edu
(512) 232-4262

Invitation to participate:
You are invited to participate in a study about the role of transition in writing. This form provides you with information about the study. As the person in charge of this research, I will also describe this study to you and address questions you may have. Before you decide whether or not to participate, please read the information below and let me know if there is anything you don't understand. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling me.

The purpose of this study is to help us learn more about how students experience transition, and specifically how transition affects writing and the writing process. Your responses to the questions through the interview will help us better understand the types of goals, expectations, and experiences that teachers have and the ways that transitions interact with them.

Should you choose to allow your child to participate, your responses will be kept entirely confidential. They will not be attached in any way to this form, nor will they have any identifying information attached to them.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to complete two formal interviews, as well allow me access to your child for informal interviews and artifacts from your child's fifth grade classroom.

Total estimated time to participate in study is three months.

Risks and Benefits of participation: There are no real risks associated with your participation in the study. However, you may experience a little fatigue as you work to respond to the questionnaires, but you may take a break or stop entirely at any time. Potential benefits for you include the chance to reflect and consider your experiences as a parent.

Compensation: There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

The **records** of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the **confidentiality** of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, contact us (see phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair of UT Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature of Participant Date

APPENDIX D (3)

Student Assent Form

ASSENT FORM

An exploration of the transition student make in a new classroom

I agree to be in a study about how I move from one grade, class, and teacher to a new grade, class, and teacher. This study was explained to my parent/s and (she/he/they) said that I could be in it. The only people who will know about what I say and do in the study will be the people in charge of the study.

In the study I will be asked questions about how I felt as a student in fourth grade as well as about what we did in class. It is okay not to remember everything and I can't do or say anything wrong. I will also be asked how I feel about myself as a student. Later, I will be asked things about how I feel in my fifth grade class, what we are doing, and how I am managing the new classroom, teacher, and grade. I will meet with Ms. Wilson about three times after school and will talk to her occasionally as well. I won't get in trouble for anything I say in this study and it is voluntary to participate.

Writing my name on this page means that the page was read (by me/to me) and that I agree to be in the study. I know what will happen to me. If I decide to quit the study, all I have to do is tell Ms. Wilson.

_____ _____

Child's Signature Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX E

Loyal
Tzeitel's Mom
Her home: Aug. 10, 2006
3pm

The interview was not recorded because Ester dislikes recordings. It was a condition of our working together. Before the interview, on the telephone when I was setting today up, she said she wouldn't be a part of it and I could use Tina I explained to her that I needed her to talk too. She agreed with this condition. So today, we sat at the kitchen table, smelling the curry and steamy vegetables stewing, and talked.

I asked her, "Tell me about your school. Did you like it?" I wondered if she might think that I was asking about how far she went in school and perhaps was attacking her dignity (I have no idea how far she went). She spoke about how she loved school but couldn't afford a uniform and that in Africa one had to have a uniform to go to school, that the uniform was what separated those who could attend school and those that couldn't. She said her parents couldn't afford a uniform for her so she would go to the schoolhouse with several others and sit outside the window, using the sand to draw her letters. They would be beaten sometimes by others who saw them and run off almost every day, but that it was worth it because she learned to read. That was her experience learning to read English. She speaks Kru however and struggled to make the languages work together. She said she often would get confused because the teacher at school was speaking in English but at home her father would spank her if she spoke in English. She never learned to write in Kru and doesn't write very good in English. She stated, "For me, language is mostly in your mind and mouth. You don't have to write it, just say it and it lives there in the air. I say to my children to clean their room and they do, it is not written down, It lives in their heads and my head and the world because I have said it."

She said that when they went into the city (Johannesburg) she knew she could read when she saw the letters above the stores and new it meant something. Then she could be a help to her dad as he tried to sell the shoes he made. She said she thought it was funny that her dad sold shoes to people in the city because she hardly wore them!

I asked her, "What do you remember about a memorable teacher?" She said she never had one like me, one that was nice and kind. Mostly they threatened her and scared her that if she didn't learn enough she would have to give her seat up to another. She was scared because she only started school when she was 10 and only then because she was seen by a lady at a store in Johannesburg speaking in English for her father, counting money, and making transactions. At that time, this lady gave her $20 for a uniform and told her dad that it was to be spent on that and only that. That if he used it for anything else, she would know and he would be cursed. Tina's mom said her dad was afraid of white people and of course bought the uniform. It was the luckiest day of her life. She

went to school until she was 17 when she could. School was different than here. People went when they could, and others came if there was a seat open. You showed up really early if you wanted to go to school that day and to have a chalkboard and seat. Her father needed her though he never took her to Johannesburg again.

When asked to tell about what feelings school brings up she said that school was a scary place for her, fraught with indignities if you struggled and pain if you misbehaved. She then talked about a boy named Dundi who sat in her row and was caught falling asleep. The teacher grabbed his arm and led him to the back of the room. No one turned around to see where he was going. Then she heard slapping sounds. The teacher called him a disgrace to his father and told him to go home and not waste her time here. Right then and there, Ester decided she would never ever do anything wrong. So, I asked, what emotions? Anger, sadness, hope. "I guess it was mostly hope. Even when things were bad at school or at home, education gave you hope. For food, for clothes, for America."

Her favorite subject was writing because she likes the way the letters look on the page. But she doesn't like anyone to read it or judge it. She just likes to know that there is meaning there on the page. "That black marks made on the page mean something and that someone else would know what they meant."

"What do you feel about Tina's previous teachers?" I asked. She said she didn't know them but that Tina went to school, all of her kids did, even in Africa. She made sure of it. She said that she imagined Tina's schooling similar to hers and not much has changed in Africa, and especially right now as the Hutsi and TuTu peoples are in war. There is little change she says, when people are fighting. Everyone is hurt and dying. School isn't on the list to better. Food, water and housing is first. She then begins about me, saying how lucky Tina was to get me, that even though I was white, I was kind and generous. That teachers are not like that in her mind and that I changed the mind of even her children (who mostly went to school in Africa). One by one they came over here, Tina the last, arriving last August after 2 years in Ghana at a refugee camp. Ester came here first over the course of 6 years brought them all here with her. She states, "You are in love with others' children and because of that you change the world one by one."

Her experiences writing consisted of mostly copying. They would copy English from old textbooks, over and over again. "Sometimes, she said, it seemed as though we weren't learning anything. But take away that book and our heart cried for it." She talked about a time she made a card for her mother, that it had a heart on it and she wrote mom on the front. She was so proud of it. When she got home, she gave it to her mom and her mom wanted to know what it said. It was then she knew that her life was going to be different and that she would go to America where people understood.

As a writer, she thinks of herself as bad, worrying even about what her signature looks like. She says, "In Africa I felt better about it." Tina is good though she says and likes to

write letters to family and friends-especially me. She says that Tina goes to the mailbox everyday hoping to get mail.

Struggles: to fall in love with another teacher, to keep her mouth shut, and to listen at home.
Successes: not sure but she better do well as she works hard to support her.

When Ester thinks about Tina moving to a new grade (and changing schools) she feels "paralyzed with sadness" about it. She wishes Tina was still at Cook, still with me, not afraid of another place. She wishes the new duplex they moved into would be nearer to Cook. But it is not and she is, "Sure you will fight if they hurt her in any way or she is not learning as much as she did last year because she is your baby too and I can count on your to be for her. A blessing, you are to our family and my baby."

APPENDIX F

Children's Attitudes Survey (CAS)

Item	Yes	No
1. I believe I could do more useful things than going to school.		
2. I like having homework.		
3. The best days of the week are those on the weekend.		
4. Usually, I feel happy on my way to school.		
5. Spending 12 years in school is a waste of time.		
6. I think that going to school is very important.		
7. I think that the long school day does not leave me enough time to play.		
8. My teacher makes school an interesting place.		
9. I think children are mostly happy when in school.		
10. Teachers make students happy.		
11. The emotion I feel most often in school is:		
12. To me the most important subject in school is:		
13. School makes me feel bored most of the time.		
14. What I learn at school is worthless.		
15. When I am in my classroom, I feel free.		
16. I am happy about going to school.		
17. I like the time I spend with my teacher.		
18. My teacher makes learning fun.		
19. Summer is the best time of the school year.		
20. Writing is a time when I feel free.		
21. Writing is hard.		
22. I am a good writer.		
23. I get to share things about myself when I write.		
24. We write a lot in school.		
25. My teacher likes writing.		
26. I feel I know a lot about writing.		
27. I think my teacher likes me.		

APPENDIX G

POSSIBLE Writing Ideas for Journal

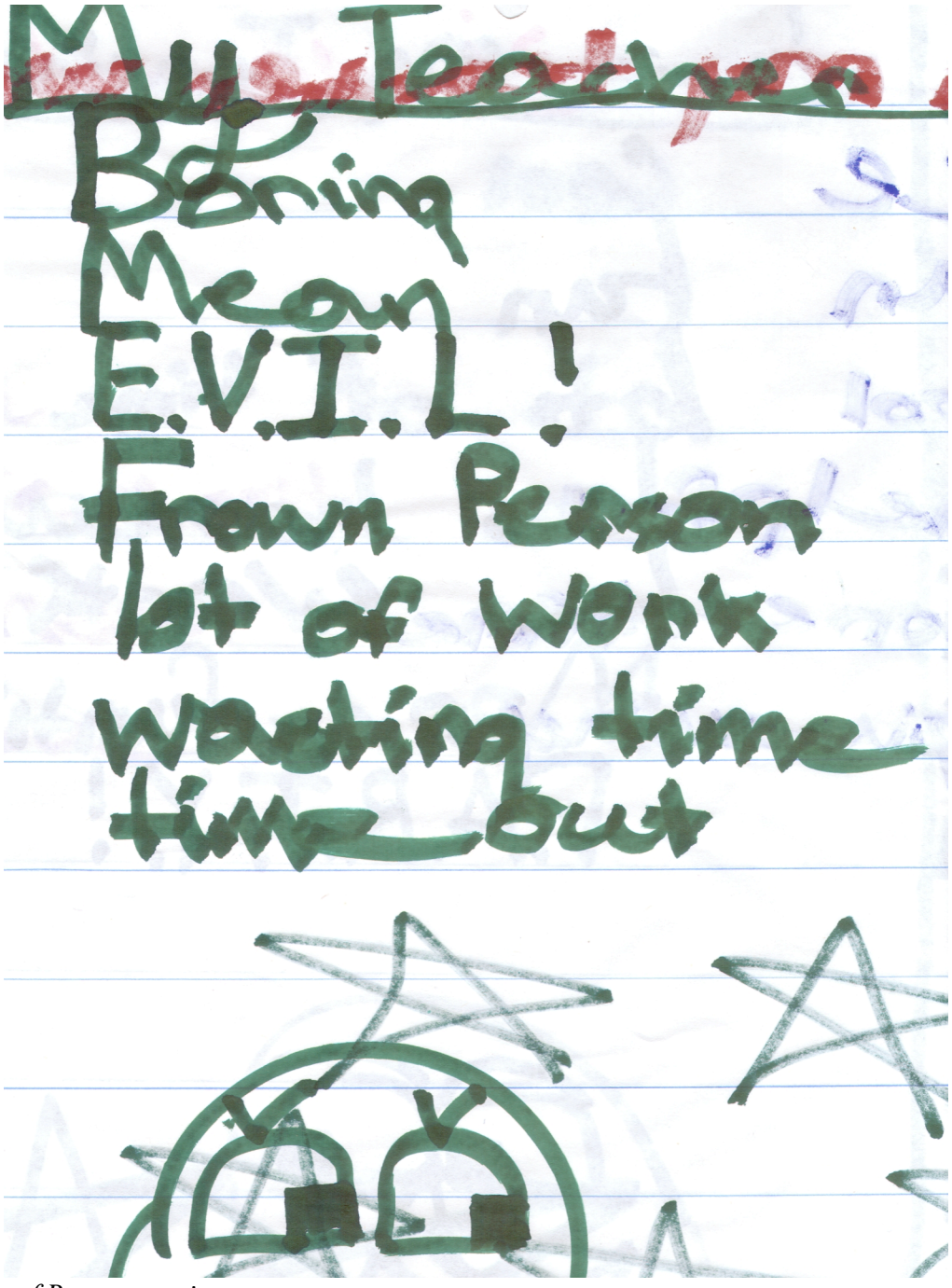
(REMEMBER: You can write whatever you want!)

1. What do you think about your teacher? Your previous teachers?
2. What are the attributes of a good teacher?
3. How do you know if a teacher loves you? Doesn't love you?
4. What is the purpose of school?
5. What emotions do you feel when you move to a new grade level? Why do you think you feel them?
6. Can a teacher help you to make an easy move to the new grade? What would she do to help you?
7. What would you suggest to Ms. Midler to make Radliff a better school?
8. How do you think the teachers feel about their jobs? How do you know?
9. Do you think that teachers have their student's interests at heart? If yes, why and if no, why.
10. Do you like to spend time with your teacher? Explain.
11. What do you think the hardest thing about school is?
12. What do you think would make school better?
13. In what ways do you learn the best?
14. Describe your writing instruction (from your teacher this year)
15. Describe what reading looks like in your class this year.
16. What do you like about your classroom this year?
17. What do you not like about your classroom this year?
18. If you sat down to coffee with your teacher, what would you tell her?
19. If you sat down to coffee with me, what would you tell me about your experience in the 5th grade?
20. What emotions do you feel most often in school? What makes you feel that way?

APPENDIX H

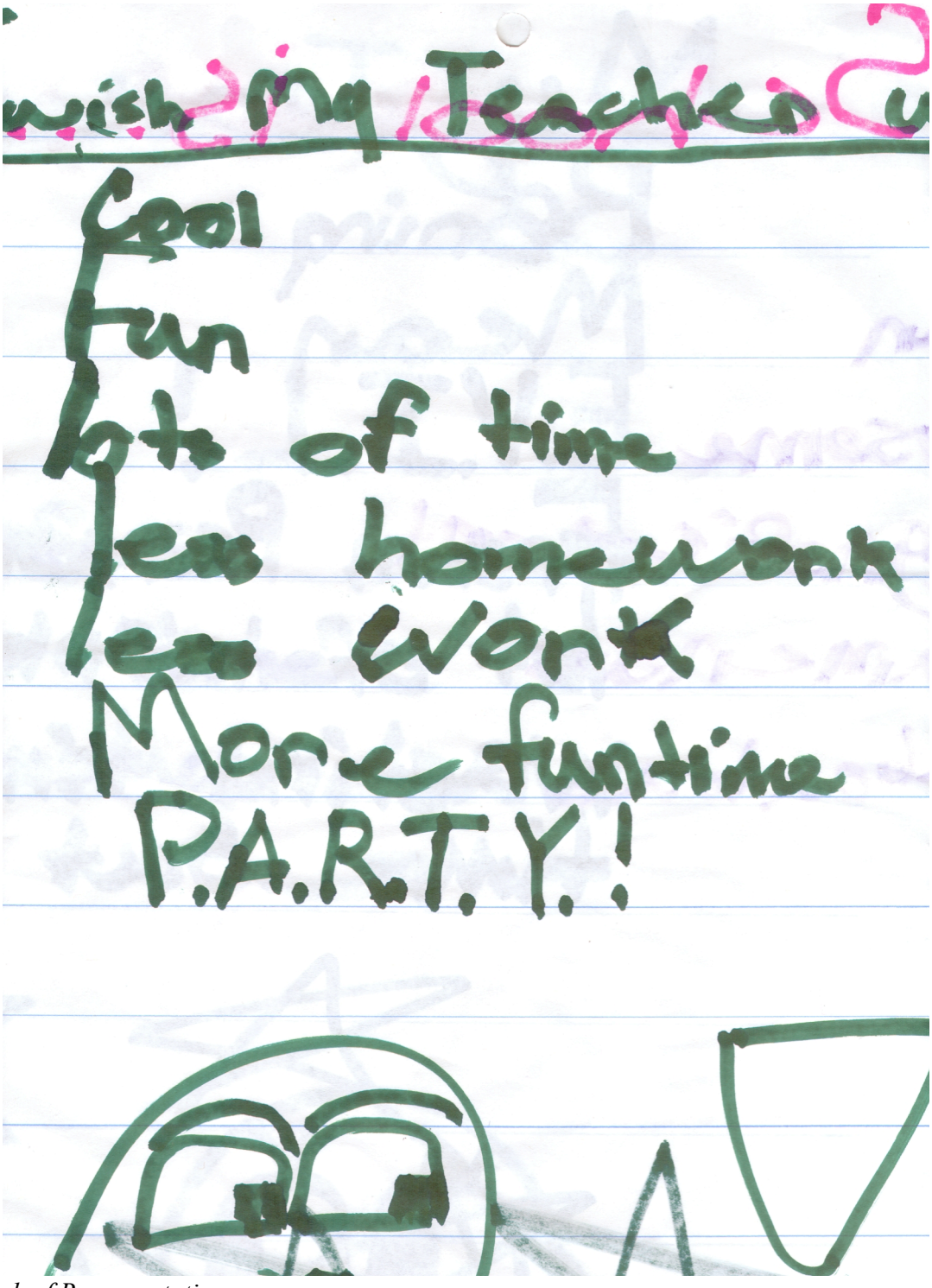
Example Aesthetic Representation (Art)

BY: DANIEL



Front of Representation

APPENDIX H (cont.)



Back of Representation

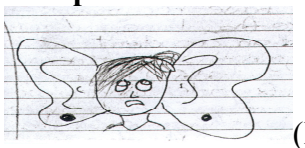
APPENDIX J

Nostalgia:
Me: What are you learning? Do you feel like you are learning a lot?
Aaron: Oh no. The lady screams at me more than she teaches me. Not last year though. You laughed and you said stories that helped us get it and you put stuff in different ways and made it harder for me and easier for Barbara and Mona. So I wasn't always sure but I would try and look smart cause in your class I was smart not just bad.

Transcendent Ideas: "Like, I would say that kids are people and are smart people, not just babies. Babies can't talk or say things except cry but kids can so they should ask kids what they need and want. We want to be smart so we wouldn't just say to eat candy and slide and swing or not go to school. We mostly like school when it is interesting and we are learning things, especially hard things. Adults should listen to kids more. We have a lot to say about how the world is. Like about being a human person and living in a world that is nice. Like you said last year, kindness. And I would tell them that school is important for a lot of reasons, not just TAKS tests but because kids are important. I would say that kids need to eat when they are hungry not just at 10:45 when lunch is so they can learn better. And I would say that America is the best place to live because there is enough food, just not enough time to eat it" (Daniel).

Match: "Schoolwork is easy but challenging at the same time. I'm in a group were reading Bridge to Terabethia. I've already read it but I don't care. I could read it a million times. I heard the next book is going to be a good one! I like it when it is hard and good" (Sophie).

Mismatch:
Me: Do you like to come to school?
Aaron: No. It's like I'm scared but not scared because I'm mad but. It's like I'm scared and mad. Just wanna punch the school down. Cause you're not in it to make it better. Awww.
Me: So, what is the best part of the day?
Aaron: Lunch. Cause she's not there.

Perception:

(Bette)

Power: "Yeah, don't correct her. Like she says, 'I have a degree. When you have one, come and talk to the class.' My teacher last year said to look something up and see who was right and sometimes she didn't know. But Ms. Bloom is not like that. It's so degrading and bad. I mean, I can't have a degree. I'm 10." (Bette)!

APPENDIX K

Transcript (excerpt) from Individual Interview with Martin

J: If you were the principal of he school, what would you do differently?
M: I'd delete the dress code and make more vacations, not too much more though, but a little bit more cause like one more day to not do school or have our parents work that day with the school. I'd give them that, like Wednesday, some Wednesday here and there and they could have some fun in the middle of the week but go all year round so you get more little breaks to be a community but still go longer.
J: anything else?
M: Yeah. I would make more party type stuff like fall festival to make community to make social things important.
J: Why are social things important?
M: Some parents don't know the kids very well and then they could know them. Maybe like after school once a month or twice a month I would have, if your parents signed a paper you could come and have a little fun after school and you could bring it at any time not just one week to bring it. I would go into the classrooms all the time. I would go in at least one class a day. If I talk about something…Like Maybe Halloween is coming near but don't get to excited. I would be more social and know better what's going on.
J: So you would talk to the kids?
M: And the teachers after school. Like every Monday I would have a meeting with a group, but not just talking, but working together. They would have stuff they would have to learn. I wouldn't care if they went fast, fast, fast, and got everything done with they would have more. I would always have goals for them too. They would learn more and not think they knew everything.
J: Anything else?
M: I would also make the library have more varieties of books and I would put more to take out. Like those ones that are special that you can't normally, I would let them, except you could talk to me first and take them out and use them at school. You would just need to talk to me first. But you can't bring them home so you can use them at school and you could learn more and especially if a teacher doesn't have as many as she needs. Like you have a bunch but most teachers don't have a bunch so they need the library to give them to them.
J: You are really good Martin. Anything else?
M: Yeah.
J: Keep going.
M: I would make teachers have to be fun. It's a rule. You have to do at least half an hour of centers. It is all right if it is during Social Studies so you can go slower with different activities so it can help all students. Then those that were fast could go faster. One center would be the teacher helping and then one where the fast kids go, like last year. I would also make it a little bit easier for people to get around. I'd put the art room right next door. So one part of the room would be more for painting and stuff, if you want to go paint more, you go in one. If you want to go in sculpture you go in the other. PE there

would be two gyms. One would be for exercise and what we normally do and one would be only for centers. You'd be doing gymnastics and all these other skills and balancing and everything. Lunch wouldn't be as small. It would be at least a regular tray you get at some restaurants. It would be at least that so we are full. You would get choices and stuff. Like the stuff the teachers can only have, you would be able to get that.
J: anything else? Okay…
M: You would have to actually talk to students. There would be like 5 counselors. They would basically know the same thing so everyone was heard and had help. Some classes would be allowed to have fun centers like ones that don't even have to do with school, like computers and the internet. Everyone in grade 2-up that wanted one would get a laptop and learn to use it. You would have a monthly project that I would check. Like you could pick a topic like, Food or Animals and do it on that. Like a powerpoint or a paper, big units. I would say that on the announcements and talk to them about each step. And each week a different subject I would talk about it. You would get really deep about it.
J: You have really thought about this a lot.
M: Yeah.
J: Why?
M: I was thinking about it as I go up in grades.
J: Do I dare ask? Are you done?
M: No. I would get snacks for the kids if they wanted them. Yeah and the teachers would have to bring something for the kids. The kids should feel special and…yeah. I would do it that if you need extra help, then you would be in one class and if you were going too fast, then you would go to another. You could switch classes for different subjects. So then you don't have a million books. If you were very low and didn't know stuff to pass, then you would maybe go to a special teacher for a small group so they aren't left out. I'd also make sure that every class has to have a pet. It's okay if it is an egg so when it hatches they find out except the teacher already knows.
J: Why an animal?
M: So they can learn about a certain animal and then connect it to their own life. I have 2 dogs and 4 cats. I would say about recess that you have to take out time and one time a week it has to be the whole grade would go to the playground together. Maybe on Wednesdays at 8am everybody has to play a sport that a teacher is teaching. To learn good rules and to be nice unless you hate it and then you could watch and learn and be outside. Except I would divide it into even teams. If you didn't like to read big, big books, I would let you read short, shorter books like if you were horrible at reading and in 9 weeks you couldn't read a big book. You could recheck books too.
J: Why do you think all those things are so important?
M: Because if they don't have fun in school they may be mad at school and then also at home and take it out on their little sister or something.

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